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1910



ANTI-MATRIMONY

by

PERCY MAC KAYE



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ANTI-MATRIMONY



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The Playhouse and the Play. Essays

To

HAROLD STEELE MACKAYE

THIS PLAY IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

BY HIS BROTHER

ANTI-MATRIMONY

A Satirical Comedy

BY
PERCY MACKAYE

*"A tinge of free soul-contemplation,
And cosmopolitanisation,
An outlook through the cloudy rifts,
By narrow prejudice unhemmed,
A stamp of high illumination,
An Ur-Natur, with lore of life: * *
The reason is—that I'm unmarried."*

IBSEN: Peer Gynt.

NEW YORK
FREDERICK A. STOKES COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

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November, 1910

M. C. W. Dec. 31/10.

FOREWORD

THE acting rights of this play in America are held, for Miss Henrietta Crosman, by Mr. Maurice Campbell, under whose management it was first produced on the stage at Ann Arbor, Michigan, May 10, 1910, since when it has been acted, in consecutive performances, through the Western States, opening in New York, at the Garrick Theatre, September 22, 1910.

All persons desiring to read in public this or any other play by the author are requested to confer with the author through the publishers.

The plays of Ibsen, and of other European masters in the modern drama, about whose works much of the dialogue of "Anti-Matrimony" lightly circles, are—it would seem needless to state here—far removed, by their sincerity and genius, beyond the direct shafts of this playful satire. Since, however, certain printed interpretations of the acted play have quaintly misconceived the main object of its allusions, and also imputed to them a personal instead of a dramatic value, it may be fitting to refer any reader, curious of the writer's personal estimate of "the Masters" and their American "disciples," to his published volume, "The Playhouse and the Play," pages ninety-seven to one hundred one.

P. M-K.

CORNISH, NEW HAMPSHIRE, October, 1910.

CHARACTERS

REV. ELLIOTT GREY.

MILDRED, *his wife.*

MORRIS, *his younger brother.*

MRS. GREY, *his mother.*

ISABELLE, *Mildred's younger sister.*

TIME—*The Present.*

PLACE—*The Grey Homestead, in a Suburban Town
of Massachusetts.*



ACT I

PROGRAMME OF THE PLAY

as first produced in New York
at the Garrick Theatre

September 22, 1910.

CHARLES FROHMAN: MANAGER

MAURICE CAMPBELL

Presents

HENRIETTA CROSMAN

in

ANTI-MATRIMONY

BY PERCY MACKAYE

CAST OF CHARACTERS

REV. ELLIOTT GREY.....Walter Greene
MILDRED, *his wife*.....Miss Crosman
MORRIS, *his younger brother*.....Gordon Johnstone
MRS. GREY, *his mother*.....Marian Holcombe
ISABELLE, *Mildred's younger sister*....Grace Carlyle

ACT I

The Hall—used as a library and living-room—of the Grey homestead, in a suburban town of Massachusetts. Through an open door and casement window at back is visible an apple orchard, in full bloom, with a distant vista of an old wooden structure shaded by elms. At the right of centre, a staircase ascends to a landing, which leads to inner rooms, right. A window, at back, lights the landing, which is separated from the hall by a slender railing and by curtains between the woodwork. At left and right, down stage, doors. At right, a fireplace, above which hangs a large diagram map. On the mantel shelf, a clock. Beneath the landing, a low desk, littered with papers. At left centre, an ample table. Under the casement window, at back, and left, book shelves. Near the newel-post of the stairs, a small table on which are a vase and a phonograph. At right, a settee. The remaining furniture is quietly tasteful and old-fashioned.

ELLIOTT GREY is sitting at the desk; MORRIS is standing near the door. The former is dressed in plain, unministerial garb—a quiet, everyday working suit; the latter wears clothes which suggest a pronounced exotic taste.

ELLIOTT

[*Rising.*]

Well, Morris, and how does it seem after five years?

MORRIS

How does what seem?

ELLIOTT

The old place. The city has slowly risen round us like a tide, but it has left this piece of our old homestead like a little island. From where you stand that outlook has hardly changed since we were boys.

MORRIS

I beg pardon. From where *I* stand the outlook has utterly changed.

ELLIOTT

[*With a quick smile.*]

Introspectively, you mean? Well, I still see the same old apple orchard and the cider-mill dam, where we used to fish for suckers.

MORRIS

[*Caustically.*]

And the suckers still bite, I suppose!

ELLIOTT

[*Putting an arm over his shoulder.*]

Come, come, dear old Morris——

MORRIS

[*Detaching himself.*]

Please! Have the decency, Elliott, not to nickname me. My name is *Maurice*.

ELLIOTT

[*Laughing.*]

Oh, I forgot. You brought that back from Paris with your imperial. Honestly, though; they're both a bit far-fetched, don't you think?

MORRIS

Yes, thank God! I had to go far for it, but I've brought back an æsthetic sense at least—to this bleak old place. Do you want to know what *I* see out there in that orchard?

ELLIOTT

Tell me.

MORRIS

In the shade of dead boughs, I see the shadows of dead men: wan, bony forms in black, with square skulls hid deep in Puritan peaked hats. Beneath nine withered cypresses they have twisted nine pulpits of poison ivy, from which they preach to the generations of young girls and boys. And the text of all nine is *Hypocrisy*. You, Elliott, are the latest of their profession—in the dear old homestead.

ELLIOTT

[*Quietly.*]

And you are my brother.

MORRIS

Very true; that's why I'm here. *Because* we are brothers, I am here to save you. I have come back from Europe, from the places of art and freedom and modernity, to this home churchyard, to rescue you from the ghosts of our Puritan ancestors; to mount beside you into that old pulpit of yours next Sunday, and declare war against all the spectres of convention.

ELLIOTT

So you would preach too!

MORRIS

Yes; iconoclasm, schism, revolution.

ELLIOTT

And what is your text?

MORRIS

Anti-Matrimony: there is the beginning of emancipation.

ELLIOTT

Emancipation of what?

MORRIS

Of the individual—the individual soul.

ELLIOTT

Honestly, don't you think there are more important matters? Look at this chart a moment. Here is a map of our city—our city as it might be—as it will be, if we citizens can learn to care less about our own little souls, and more about the great soul about us—the community.

[MORRIS *turns away with a shrug and lights a cigarette.*]

The city—think what we might make of it! Not a crumbling heap of scrambling individuals, each seeking his own salvation at the expense of all, but a strong tower of Man—organic, coherent, self-planned, guarding the salvation of all in the subordinated good of each.

MORRIS

[*Humming.*]

Frere Jacques, Frere Jacques,
Dormez-vous? Dormez-vous?

MORRIS

[*Pointing with a pen-holder.*]

Look: here's the river, fronted by public architecture and the park embankment. Here are commons for the children. Here are public tenements for the poor. This is the Hall of Labor. Here is the civic theatre, focus of festival, pageantry and the united arts. Here are the central library, the national

academies—of science, painting, sculpture; the public athletic stadium. These are the Halls of Arbitration and Invention, the municipal house of music, the public studios of the arts and crafts.

MORRIS

Sonnez les matines,
Sonnez les matines:
Din-din-don!

ELLIOTT

All this, my dear fellow, is no chart of Utopia. It is the published plan of shrewd public leaders: citizens who no longer laugh at applying imagination to men's common interests. This now, as a minister and citizen, is my chief work and study, and I am only one worker among a hundred thousand. So you see this "home-churchyard," as you call it, is not wholly haunted by ghosts. What do you say to our planning?

MORRIS

[*Snapping his fingers.*]

That—for your ideal community! Freedom is the first thing, and freedom is based in the individual; but the home undermines the individual, converting him to a tyrant or a slave. Therefore the first act of a free community must be to abolish the home.

ELLIOTT

Do I understand, because you have chosen to live with Isabelle outside the marriage code, that you advocate a similar course for all men?

MORRIS

Certainly. Marriage is a mere makeshift.

ELLIOTT

Of course; I grant you that, at once. But so was the tea-kettle in which Watts discovered the steam-engine—a mere makeshift. In the sight of God, what is man himself—but a makeshift? Yet it is surprising what a miracle can be educed from a makeshift, if we have the patience to wheedle it and the imagination to construct it.

The question is: For a starter, what have we better than a makeshift?

[*The door, right, is opened a little way. On the sill*

MRS. GREY *pauses, hesitatingly.*]

MORRIS

What have we better? We have the thing itself—the ideal—the ultimate consummation! We have love—passionate, chainless, Olympian love; yes, free love—free love. Do the words burn you?

[*The door is closed quickly.*]

ELLIOTT

Hush! That was mother.

MORRIS

“Hush”!—The Hypocrite’s own lullaby!

ELLIOTT

You might be tactful, at least.

MORRIS

Of course! “Tip-toe goes the Tactful-Man!” We learned it in our pinafores, with “Trotty goes a lady.”

ELLIOTT

Don’t you know that it hurts—it shocks her?

MORRIS

Of course I know it. I know that it shocked the world when Galileo told it that it turned. Well, there must be one truth-teller in a generation.

ELLIOTT

My dear Galileo! the world—as you have said—will go on turning, but let me remind you that it revolves quietly on the same old axis and never treads on the corns of the constellations. Revolution is not necessarily Chaos-come-again.

MORRIS

[*Bows, with a smile.*]

The prettiest retort I’ve heard since leaving Paris. Quite worthy of a modern and a European.

ELLIOTT

[After returning his mock-bow.]

Thanks, boy. I guess, though, you and I are still Yankee-stock, with some salt of the old humor to save us.

MORRIS

No, by the Lord, not I! Your American humor is the bane of all art and temperament and beauty! It hangs over the land like a malaria; its mosquitoes infect you with an itching laughter. No, sir; I've recovered once. Deliver me from ever catching that contagion again.

ELLIOTT

[With a laugh.]

I'm afraid, then, you're rashly exposing yourself here. You'll find us a hotbed of Yankee tricks—especially Mildred.

MORRIS

Nonsense; Mildred is a cosmopolite. To be sure, she married you, a Yankee minister, but that was just tragic fate, and she has kept herself wonderfully uncontaminated. *[Exaltedly.]* Mildred is one of the Muses, wandered from her mountain. I have hopes of her climbing up again—to rejoin Isabelle.

ELLIOTT

Capital! Mildred will make a poet of you, if you give her the chance.

MORRIS

She might have made one of you, if you hadn't married her. Husbands are banished from Helicon.

ELLIOTT

Come now, dear fellow; this is all very clever and amusing for you and me, but don't forget that it won't do for our little Mammy in there. She is quite innocent of humor, Yankee or transatlantic. She has been looking forward to your return home for years, and when you arrived from the steamer yesterday with Isabelle and little Cynthia, and sprung that amazing news that you had never been married, she was prostrated. She says little, but she loves you, and she is very unhappy.

MORRIS

Do I want her to be? But there you are! There's the tyranny of home life, as I told you. Sons must lie to their mothers, brothers must cry "Hush" and advise dissembling; the whole house must smell mouldy with hypocrisy, so that old family ghosts shall not be offended, and prudish little mothers shall remain blindfold and happy. But what of the truth? Truth, sir, is my religion.

ELLIOTT

Behold him! The old family ghost has swapped his peaked hat for an imperial.

MORRIS

Oh, shucks!

ELLIOTT

Bully! "Shucks" is the stuff! You used to say "Shucks!" when you'd lost a sucker in the mill-pond. Do say it again.

MORRIS

Never, while I live! Come, speak out: Do you want me to leave this house, or to live in it happily—truthfully?

ELLIOTT

Both. I want you to leave it for a wedding, and live happily in it—as long after as possible.

MORRIS

That's your proposition; I refuse it. Now, here is mine. You are my brother. Mildred is Isabelle's sister. I ask you and your wife to join me and my mistress in a crusade of emancipation; a crusade against marriage; a campaign of Anti-Matrimony. Will you?

ELLIOTT

Shucks, dear boy! You really must learn to say "Shucks" again.

MORRIS

Well and good. But remember: Since Isabelle and I cannot avoid being relatives, you and the family—take the consequences!

[*Exit MORRIS out of doors. ELLIOTT starts to follow, but pauses, biting the tip of his pen-holder. The door, right, slowly opens again, and there enters a subdued, neat little woman, with smooth brown hair, growing white about the temples. She comes forward hesitatingly, holding the fingers of her left hand in her right, as in habit. This posture she alters occasionally, to stroke pensively downward the front of her dress.*]

MRS. GREY

Are you alone, Elliott?

ELLIOTT

[*Turning.*]

He's in the orchard, Mother.

MRS. GREY

I have been trying to comprehend, Elliott, why this visitation should have come upon us. For nine generations, your father's family and mine have been pew-holders, or ministers, right here in Massachusetts.

ELLIOTT

Perhaps that's why, Mother.

MRS. GREY

Why—*what*, Elliott?

ELLIOTT

Crops need rotating, you know.

MRS. GREY

Crops? You mistook me. I was speaking of our families, your father's and mine. I have been trying to reconcile it; to make it seem right.

ELLIOTT

Now, dearest Mammy, no tears.

MRS. GREY

[*Wiping her eyes shyly.*]

I didn't know that I was—excuse me. Morris was always a peculiar boy. Your father was peculiar, at times—only at times. We used to say often, at breakfast, or walking to church, or—“Morris is peculiar, but a nice boy.” He never liked to wear stiff collars, but then, somehow—he looked nice without them.

ELLIOTT

I guess he always will.

MRS. GREY

Will *what*, Elliott?

ELLIOTT

[*Smiling.*]

Be a nice boy.

MRS. GREY

Oh, do you think he will! And will he let you marry him to Isabelle right away? They needn't wait for their trunks.

ELLIOTT

I was just talking with him about that.

MRS. GREY

What did he say? I overheard him using such—such unusual expressions.

ELLIOTT

Whatever he may *say*, Motherkin, we must never forget that Morris is a really nice boy.

MRS. GREY

What *should* I do without you, Elliott! You are always so reassuring. And so is Mildred. She is an ideal minister's wife. She is so tactful. And though she is quick and gay, she never hurts anybody's feelings. Sometimes I don't understand her jokes, but she is always ready to repeat them to me—slowly. Even when she dances at the church sociables, she dances so tactfully. You and she are so beautifully matched. I do wish that Isabelle——

ELLIOTT

Isabelle is much younger, and so is Morris.

MRS. GREY

And to think *they* should have the baby. Poor little darling! Eleven months, and it has never been christened.

ELLIOTT

Hasn't Mildred told you her plan?

MRS. GREY

A plan? Has Mildred a plan? But, Elliott, how *could* it be christened? Just *Cynthia* would never do; and Isabelle's name is Allston. Oh, I can't seem to realize it yet!

ELLIOTT

[*Putting his arm about her.*]

There, there! Let's go and have a peep at her. She shall be *Cynthia Grey*, of course.

MRS. GREY

Oh yes, Elliott. You *will* marry them, won't you—before the neighbors begin to call?

[*They go into an inner room, left. After a pause, the door, right, is opened, and MILDRED enters. She is dressed in a simple morning-gown, and moves lightly across the room. She lifts a sewing-bag from the settee and takes it to the table, where she sits. Behind her follows ISABELLE, dressed in a gown of charm, symmetry and distinction. She pauses, with a half-studied, half-artless pose of young-girlishness.*]

MILDRED

I left it on the settee.

ISABELLE

Sewing is such unemancipated work. I should think you would prefer dancing, Mildred. You used to dance well to my fiddling.

MILDRED

Old married folks dance to a finer fiddle, my dear Isabelle.

[Holding a silk thread in her teeth, she pulls it taut with her left hand, while with her right she draws a knitting-needle across it, humming between her lips.]

Needles and pins! Needles and pins!

ISABELLE

Just what I've been telling you! And yet you look needles and pins and daggers at me because I'm not silly enough to follow your example.

MILDRED

Daggers at you!—I?

ISABELLE

Well, anyway, Maurice's mother does—when she looks at me at all.

MILDRED

Mother Grey? Why, Mother could sooner swallow daggers than look them. I wouldn't cast Motherkin as the villainess.

ISABELLE

[*With a compassionate smile.*]

How little you know of human nature, my poor Mildred!

MILDRED

How could it be otherwise, dear? You forget my horizons are limited. Perhaps, now, if I could realize some of your larger experiences—

ISABELLE

That's it. But how can you? Here you are imprisoned in a petty American home, shackled for life to a suburban minister—of all men-creatures!—enslaved to an inexorable mother-in-law, and compelled, by the pin-pricks of torturing respectability, to receive at church sociables! My poor Mildred! I feel for you deeply.

MILDRED

You make me feel for myself, Belle. How your vocabulary has improved!

ISABELLE

Naturally; I have improved it by something better than sewing. Maurice and I are disciples of the world-literature. I suppose you don't know the works of the old Founders.

MILDRED

The old founders? You mean of the United States?

ISABELLE

My dear, the United States lies outside the pale of literature. I refer to the old Masters of our drama and philosophy! But of course *you* never read them.

MILDRED

Oh, not so bad as that. Elliott often reads aloud Bishop Berkeley, and I read to him Shakespeare and——

ISABELLE

Please—please! My poor sister. Don't tell me you are ignorant of the old Masters—even their names! Haven't you ever heard of Nietzsche?

MILDRED

How do you spell it, dear?

ISABELLE

Great heavens!—Or Ibsen?

MILDRED

[*With wicked assumption of naïveté.*]
To be sure! Wasn't he an arctic-explorer?

ISABELLE

Oh, you're beyond salvation!—— Do you know why Maurice and I decided to return to this unspeakable country?

MILDRED

Seems to me Morris mentioned—some complication about a mortgage, wasn't it?——

ISABELLE

Mortgage! O Mildred, how garishly American you are! Maurice and I left Europe for your sakes. Maurice came back to save Elliott, and I to save you.

MILDRED

Dear Belle, I might have guessed it. It's so like you—both.

ISABELLE

We might have continued to revel alone in the mountain glories of our emancipation. But no, like Zarathustra, we decided to descend and bear our sunrise into the valleys of convention, and scatter our stars among the cities of hypocrisy. And so, soon after the baby came, we began to think of Elliott and you.

MILDRED

I know, dear. I'm so sorry they have the servant problem over there too.

ISABELLE

You literal-minded wife! Have you lost all imagination? Dear, dear! How can I ever thank Maurice enough for preserving me from this wifehood!

MILDRED

[Rising.]

Hark, dear!

ISABELLE

What's the matter?

MILDRED

Isn't that the baby crying?

ISABELLE

[*With visible anxiety.*]

Do you think so? I'd better see. [*She hurries toward the door left, but suddenly pauses as she catches a glimpse outside of MORRIS looking in the door. Her manner instantly changes.*] Nonsense, it's of no importance.

MILDRED

No importance! But the child—

[*MILDRED, too, catches sight of Morris.*]

ISABELLE

Please change the subject. My dearest Maurice has told me never to belittle my mind with such trifles.

MILDRED

What model obedience!

ISABELLE

It's instinctive. As my Maurice has so eloquently expressed it in one of his most convincing sonnets to me,

“Where law lays no compulsion love obeys.”

MILDRED

I congratulate your husband!

MORRIS

Please!—don't insult your sister. She has no husband.

ISABELLE

[*Turning.*]

Why, Maurice! How you surprised me!

MILDRED

How you surprised us—both.

MORRIS

[*Snubbing MILDRED, speaks to ISABELLE.*]

I am happy, love, to surprise you in thoughts of me. I'll be back in a moment.

[*Throwing a kiss, which she returns, he disappears toward the orchard. ISABELLE then goes quickly to the door left, listens, opens it a crack, looks in longingly, but closes it again slowly.*]

ISABELLE

She's in her crib—the darling! Her grandmother is looking at her.

MILDRED

Looking daggers?

ISABELLE

[Draws herself up haughtily.]

Mildred, you heard just now how nobly Maurice rescued me from your insult. But you have not yet retracted it.

MILDRED

My dear, now you're silly.

ISABELLE

You referred to him as my husband.

MILDRED

And I shall advise him to confirm the reference.

ISABELLE

[Wildly.]

But how dare you! I *never* said he was my husband.

MILDRED

I trust you will say so before night.

ISABELLE

Then how—how could you—when I never said it—how could you ever suppose such a thing!

MILDRED

I'm not supposing it; I'm just arranging it.

ISABELLE

[Gasping.]

Oh, I thought——

MILDRED

It's so simple, you see, having a minister and justice of the peace right in the family.

ISABELLE

Elliott, you mean! I see; you are plotting to get your jailer to put me in irons too. I hold out my arms to emancipate you, and you would clap handcuffs on me. Never! My lover and I are free. I am Maurice's mistress; I rejoice, I revel, to declare it.

MILDRED

Belle, don't be shocking.

ISABELLE

Shocking! Ha, at last! I have looked forward to this moment for years.

MILDRED

Please look back on it, as quickly as possible.

ISABELLE

I had faith, and my faith has borne fruit. I *believed* you would call me "shocking." [MILDRED *hides her face.*] Now I *know* I am great. Yes, I can say it simply, proudly. [*Observing* MILDRED, *who rises and turns away to stifle her laughter.*] Oh, turn away from me. Spurn me. Leave me! You laugh! You deride me, of course. I am your fallen sister, cast off, held up to pitiless mockery, in the rack of convention. Oh, how history repeats itself!

MILDRED

[*Straightening her face.*]

Never, Isabelle! I defy history to reproduce you.

ISABELLE

That's because you know nothing of history or life or experience. Do not imagine we are created unique—sweet as it would be to think so! We are all links in a sublime evolution. All the great of our sex have been shocking—from Cleopatra to Candida.

MILDRED

[*Raising her hands, turns away in laughter.*]

Sisterkin! Sisterkin!

ISABELLE

Yes, even so they were cried out upon! Has Time forgotten the ignoble persecution of Magda? When she strove to lift up the petty souls of her relatives into the lofty plain of her own individuality—what was *her* reward? History has recorded! And glorious Rebecca—divine Rebecca West!

MILDRED

What did *she* do? Please tell me.

ISABELLE

How could *you* understand? *She* was not the dupe of matrimonial ghosts. She shocked the world and taught her lover to shock it. Together they obeyed the call of their supersouls, and she leaned on her

lover's heart as they went forth to the mill-race.
[*Melodramatically.*] O my Mildred, must I also be
driven to the dark waters?

MILDRED

Don't, dear; don't!

ISABELLE

Yes, they alone who shock the world shall save it.
The lives of supermen "await alike the inevitable
hour."

MILDRED

You have humbled me, Belle. Teach me some more.

ISABELLE

Ah, my sister; if you could indeed learn from
me——

MILDRED

But I AM learning. I'm taking notes.

ISABELLE

You would learn that I am only the last of a great
line of female emancipators. I could tell you of Nora
Halsted and Ann Whitefield and Rautendelein—
they're all in Maurice's dress-suit case.

MILDRED

Oh, where is it?

ISABELLE

Upstairs, in his room, by the washstand. He always keeps them for reference, in his playwriting. Magda hasn't arrived yet; she's in my steamer trunk.

MILDRED

Mayn't I go and fetch some of them down?

ISABELLE

You? You, a married woman, invade the sanctuaries of the Masters! No, *I* guard the key of the suit-case.

MILDRED

Do you mean I mayn't even set eyes on them?

ISABELLE

Not while you continue to live in your indelicate bondage with Elliott.

MILDRED

I suppose, then, I am never to tread those sacred precincts of his harem.

ISABELLE

His harem! What are you talking about?

MILDRED

Your rivals—Ann, Rebecca and the rest—whom you keep shut so fast in the sacred suit-case.

ISABELLE

How indecorously your married mind interprets us! I have no rivals, my dear; I can never have any. Those immortal women are all embodied in me. That is why Maurice loves me; that is why I lure onward and upward the soul of Maurice—his *ewig weibliche*. I'm an incarnation. Can't you understand?

MILDRED

I think I'm beginning to, dear. I was just wondering—suppose he should meet another one.

ISABELLE

Another what?

MILDRED

Another incarnation.

ISABELLE

But how could he while I live? Well, here I am! Don't you see?

MILDRED

Oh!—why, yes. How stupid of me! But what—what if *you* should meet another one?

ISABELLE

That's different, of course; *I* might. For, you see, *I* am the incarnation; not Maurice. I lead him upward, and he follows. Do you follow me?

MILDRED

Yes, I follow; he follows—what follows then?

ISABELLE

Don't be facetious. Put down your sewing. You said you wished to learn. You can't expect to understand deep things without concentration.

MILDRED

Please; I'll be good.

ISABELLE

Well, then—to make it clearer—when I lead onward and upward, just supposing he *shouldn't* follow——

MILDRED

[*Shutting her eyes.*]

Bing!——Poor Morris!

ISABELLE

Yes; you see, then, how awful it would be if we were tied together for life by the chains of convention.

MILDRED

Do you suppose it would be suicide, or simply murder?

ISABELLE

Oh, of course, we're not supposing. As a matter of fact, I need never dread that Maurice will bring such suffering upon himself, because—well, to speak frankly, because I know the unlimited influence for his own good which I exert over him.

MILDRED

My little sister, you have matured wonderfully in womanhood. I confess that all you have said sets me thinking.

ISABELLE

Please, then, dear, apply it to your own slavish and unhappy circumstances. If you love Elliott as I love Maurice, emancipate yourself and him and consecrate yourselves, like Maurice and me, to the cause of Anti-Matrimony.

MILDRED

Do you mean I should apply for a divorce?

ISABELLE

Heaven forbid! Nothing is more bourgeois and American. No; just confess your undying abhorrence of the marriage state, study the Masters, and make it your mission to shock people, with the utmost consideration and good breeding.

[*Enter MORRIS, carrying sprays of apple-blossom.*]

MORRIS

My belovèd!

ISABELLE

My adorèd! How long you have stayed away!

MORRIS

I have been searching for a token of our love, and I have brought you these.

ISABELLE

[*Taking them.*]

Apple-blossoms! How perfectly sweet!

MORRIS

And mystical, dear, as they are sweet. I stood beneath the orchard boughs and watched the pollen-dusted bees singing from flower to flower; each bough was a little commonwealth of natural lovers.

ISABELLE

[*Sighing.*]

A little commonwealth of natural lovers!

MORRIS

Each delicate bloom yielded its flushing soul to its ardent wooer. All was harmonious love and lyric rapture. Here, I thought, is the Garden of Anti-Matrimony. I will pluck of these blooms and bring them to my beloved.

ISABELLE

Your beloved accepts them as a perfect symbol.

MORRIS

Wear them as your garland of innocence and free love.

MILDRED

[*Coming between them from behind, takes the apple-blossoms.*]

May *I* not share in this symbol?

ISABELLE

[*With wide eyes.*]

Mildred, how gross of you!

MORRIS

[*To ISABELLE.*]

Have you made no headway in converting her to our cause?

ISABELLE

I'm sure I don't know. When I think that I have succeeded in awakening her soul just a little—she makes some terrible remark like that.

MORRIS

I think, love, she may not have understood us. [*Glancing at Mildred, who has resumed her needle-work with sudden fervor.*] She seems absorbed in her sewing.

ISABELLE

That's just it. Her instincts are so abjectly matrimonial.

MORRIS

[*To MILDRED.*]

May I ask, is that embroidery?

MILDRED

Do you think it pretty? It's for Cynthia.

MORRIS

For Cynthia!

MILDRED

Yes; I'm just finishing it for to-morrow's ceremony.

ISABELLE

What ceremony?

MILDRED

Haven't you heard? Why, the christening.

MORRIS AND ISABELLE

The christening!

MILDRED

Yes; Elliott and I thought it would be so nice to have it performed just after the wedding—right in the home circle, you know.

MORRIS

[*To ISABELLE.*]

What is the meaning of this?

ISABELLE

I suppose this is a sample of her American humor.

MILDRED

[*Showing the embroidery.*]

See; it's a baby chasuble. It slips over the short dress, and her head goes through here. The little new moons are for *Cynthia*, and the pussy-willow buds are for *Grey*.

MORRIS

Grey? Not if *I* know it! "Cynthia" all you please, but "Grey"—never! No child of mine shall be suspected of legitimacy.

MILDRED

Why, Morris——

MORRIS

No! My daughter is a waif, a foundling—thank God!

MILDRED

Isn't she to have *any* last name?

MORRIS

That's the state's business; not mine.

MILDRED

Oh! are you going to hand her over to the state authorities?

MORRIS

Why not? They can name her what they please; anything but "Grey."

MILDRED

[*Pensively.*]

Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut; which do *you* prefer, Isabelle? Cynthia, Mass.?

ISABELLE

I *never* prefer; I ask Maurice. One doesn't argue with Maurice; one learns from him.

MORRIS

Children in arms are a menace to a free republic. They are the natural enemies of individual freedom. Therefore, it is the first function of a civilized state to provide a national defence of nursing-laboratories and to levy a tax on all celibate citizens for their maintenance.

MILDRED

You mean that the bachelors and old maids should support all the babies? But wouldn't that tend to encourage matrimony?

MORRIS

No; for the state should compel all legitimate issue to be reared at home. The servant problem then would do the rest, and the matrimonial race would cease to survive.

MILDRED

I see. Your state would encourage race-suicide.

MORRIS

Not in the least. The child-bearing population, you see, would be divided into two classes: Mats and Anti-Mats. But, of course, the Anti-Mats, being exempt from both nurses and taxes, would be doubly encouraged to provide the needful population.

ISABELLE

Now, Mildred, I trust you see the hopelessness of arguing with Maurice.

MILDRED

Oh, I do. And so, my dear sister and brother, I propose that we just stop playing this lively little game of word-tennis and take hold of hands like good children, and go in and give a kiss to our nice old Mammy, and tell her to get ready for the wedding.

MORRIS

[Beside himself.]

Wedding, again! You and Elliott amaze me. Haven't I told you twenty times we're not married and never will be!

MILDRED

Yes, my dear boy; but fortunately since you arrived last night only the family have heard your remarks. So, since it's only a matter of becoming my brother-in-law——

MORRIS

In-law! Isabelle, to think of having IN-LAW branded on our souls!

MILDRED

Come, dears, we must really be practical. Elliott can sign your papers and bless you in a jiffy. Or if you want to wait a little, and meantime *call* yourselves Mr. and Mrs.——

MORRIS

Call ourselves! Mildred, I thought better of you. Do you wish us to be guilty of a lie—a living lie of love?

MILDRED

I am quite serious. Your mother is getting old. The scandal would break her heart and her health. Please! Won't you be good for your mother's sake?

MORRIS

Yes; I *will* be good for my mother's sake. I will consider her weakness, and be unmoved by it—for her sake. Mothers have been weak before mine.' In war, mothers have begged their sons to desert the cause—for their sakes; and afterwards they have blessed those sons for refusing to desert—for their sakes. Do you imagine, then, that I will betray *my* cause in the state—*my* battle—*my*——
[*The door, left, opens and MRS. GREY enters, in alarm.*]

MRS. GREY

Mildred! Come quickly. I think the baby has swallowed a safety-pin.

ISABELLE

Oh!

[*Agitated, she starts to leave, but stops, glancing at MORRIS, who has also started, but checks himself abruptly.*]

MILDRED

Don't worry, mother. The state will remove it. Ask Morris.

MRS. GREY

State, my dear!

MILDRED

What do *you* say, Isabelle?

ISABELLE

[*Looking toward MORRIS, but by her gestures anxiously urging MILDRED toward the door.*]

I am listening to Maurice. I'm sure *you* are quite competent to deal with these petty concerns of digestion.

MILDRED

[*Following MRS. GREY out.*]

All right, mother. I will assist at the state ceremony.

[*Exeunt. ISABELLE, after watching the door close, turns slowly to MORRIS, who stands gloomily exalted and absorbed.*]

ISABELLE

Belovèd—we are alone.

MORRIS

[*Starting.*]

At last! [*They approach each other from opposite sides of the room.*]

ISABELLE

My superman!

MORRIS

My oversoul!

ISABELLE

My Zarathustra!

MORRIS

My Heloise!

ISABELLE

My Master Builder!

MORRIS

My Rebekka West!

[*They embrace.*]

ISABELLE

I will stand beside you in the pillory of public scorn; husbands and wives shall point, and name us a hated name; yet will I smile and say, Lo! I am glad and unashamed.

MORRIS

Our love shall lift us above the clouds; the princes of the world shall bow down to us in their hearts; but behold, the slave and the fool and the hypocrite shall cry, "Unclean! unclean!"

ISABELLE

We will go forth alone into the deserts and the silent places. There we will supply to the world detailed information of our solitary days.

MORRIS

Decadence, ribaldry, scandal, can never wrong us, my beloved; for they shall all be transmuted to material for my latest play.

ISABELLE

My modern mystic!

MORRIS

My immortal Bashkirtseff!

[*He leads her to the open door, at back. Meantime, the door, left, reopens and MILDRED enters.*]

MILDRED

It *was* a safety-pin, my dears, so she didn't swallow it.

[*MILDRED looks toward MORRIS and ISABELLE, who manifestly have not heard her, where they stand—their arms about each other—facing the orchard. Taking in the situation, MILDRED hurries tip-toe across to the foot of the stairs, which she climbs, very quietly, to the landing, pausing once or twice to glance toward the two lovers, who remain oblivious of her entrance.*]

MORRIS

Hark to the golden ritual of the bees; they are chanting hymns to their Utopia. How did you like my symbol?

ISABELLE

[*Spying on the table the baby-chasuble, lifts it, unseen of MORRIS.*]

Beautiful!

MORRIS

You're not wearing the apple-blossoms.

ISABELLE

*[Quickly dropping the baby dress, picks up the apple
sprays from the table.]*

They would fade, dearest. I'll put them in water.
[She takes them to the vase by the newel-post.]

MORRIS

[Watching her.]

Keep your face so—against them.

ISABELLE

[Smiling.]

Are they so becoming to me?

MORRIS

You—to them. Ah, my living goddess, I am afraid
I did wrong to bring you back to this old house of
phantoms.

ISABELLE

Don't be blue.

MORRIS

I have reasons. I have wrestled with my brother,
to save him. It's hopeless. How did you succeed
with your sister?

ISABELLE

No better, I'm afraid. She lacks the tragic spirit;
they all do here in America. I've quoted the Masters
—I've quoted you—I've told her about everything,
except our marriage. Do you think I ought to men-
tion it—confidentially?

MORRIS

Mention it! Great God, haven't I told you to forget it?

ISABELLE

Certainly, dear. But I thought perhaps if I just mentioned how we were married for form's sake in Vienna, but how of course that can never affect our ideals——

MORRIS

[In a great voice.]

Isabelle!

[Above on the landing MILDRED beckons; ELLIOTT enters there from off right; MILDRED motions silence to him, while they listen, with pantomime, which indicates their huge enjoyment of what they hear.]

ISABELLE

Please don't get excited. I say—for argument—to convince Mildred—I don't see why the mere fact of a marriage certificate— Really, *I* feel that it makes our position stronger. Don't you?

MORRIS

Are you mad? Didn't you burn our marriage certificate in Berlin?

ISABELLE

Of course, dear. But I suppose there is some record in the German archives.

MORRIS

Buried! It shall lie buried in that heathen language forever.

ISABELLE

Dearest, you forget. It's the language of Nietzsche.

MORRIS

Don't interrupt. I say that no one—*no one* must ever learn of our marriage. It was a weak and barbarous act. I committed it in a prosaic moment—as a concession to you.

ISABELLE

O Maurice! You *know* I conceded it for your sake, so as not to complicate your career.

MORRIS

My career! Don't you realize I can never have a career if this is known?

ISABELLE

But, dearest——

MORRIS

Silence! Let me tell you this: the moment you ever mention our marriage—that moment is the end of our love; that moment is the knell of our joy; in that moment I will repudiate you—deny you and that wretched bondage; from that moment I will continue my career alone.

ISABELLE

Thirty-seven! This is the thirty-seventh time we've had this argument, and you always win out, my beloved. You are always reasonable and always right. So, please forgive me, and give me a kiss.

MORRIS

It's terrible. You see how the mere thought of matrimony degrades us, and makes us wrangle like wretched husbands and wives.

ISABELLE

Come, we'll forget it.

MORRIS

You promise me—never to refer to it again?

ISABELLE

Never, never again—so long as you love me!

MORRIS

[*Kissing her.*]

My guiding star! After all, man is the reasoner. And now, my own, we will press onward in our campaign together, shall we?

ISABELLE

I will lead you, love—wherever you decide.

MORRIS

This, then, is the plan. We will try to capture this household, but by a different attack. You will approach Elliott, and I will approach Mildred. *You* will emancipate the male and *I* the female. This plan is psychologically correct; I believe it will succeed.

ISABELLE

Just as you wish, dear. I have hopes of Elliott, but Mildred—you will find Mildred incorrigibly conventional. Where are you going?

MORRIS

To find them. Come—I cannot quite agree with you, my love, in regard to Mildred. I believe that Mildred's soul is sufficiently mystical to be saved, and I really think——

[*Exeunt. The door closes. Bursting into laughter,*
MILDRED and ELLIOTT come down the stairs.]

MILDRED

Aren't they heavenly?

ELLIOTT

But we were fiends to listen.

MILDRED

Dear unsuspecting cherubs!

ELLIOTT

It's on my conscience.

MILDRED

It's not on mine. Married! "O living lie of love!"
Rev. Elliott Grey, this is the opportunity of our lives.

ELLIOTT

What must we do?

MILDRED

Be saved, of course. Be converted.

ELLIOTT

Converted?

MILDRED

To Anti-Matrimony.

ELLIOTT

Mrs. Reverend Elliott—you're the limit. Do you intend——

MILDRED

Certainly. I intend to administer some anti-matrimonial toxin. These poor babes have got lost in the misty continental woods and fetched home the latest imported influenza. It's called the *tragicus mysticis-mus morbiditi*. "Mystics," for short.

ELLIOTT

My dear, you should hang out a shingle.

MILDRED

You see, the nice old foreign folks thrive on it; it's just a pleasant after-dinner pinch of snuff to them. But when our young Yankees catch it, it's like a sudden pneumonia to their native humor, which very seldom survives. So, I say, we must be up and doing for these two poor lambs; we must nurse them back to the Yankee fold.

ELLIOTT

Very good. How shall we give them the anti-toxin?

MILDRED

Leave that to me. It's a delicate task, and needs gradual doses.

ELLIOTT

But don't you think we'd better just tell them how we overheard——

MILDRED

O you blunder beetle! How do you suppose Morris would take that?

ELLIOTT

Like a man. Keep his head, and lump it.

MILDRED

The lump, my dear, would be on *your* manly head. I can see Morris lumping it. I can see your dear mother watching and hearing him lump it. I can see

the whole Grey family, and the families of the Reverend Grey's whole parish, listening and louting low to the lumping of Morris! No, goodman Elliott, your grey matter doesn't absorb the full fun of our situation. It's more serious than you think.

ELLIOTT

Than *I* think? That's a good one! I think it's mighty serious—especially for mother. Do you think Morris would really do as he said, and deny his marriage with Isabelle to our faces?

MILDRED

I'm sure of it. They both would. And to get proofs of their marriage from Germany would be very impracticable. No; we've got to get them to own up of themselves. What's more—we've got to get them to own up *before* they start to convert the United States.

ELLIOTT

I see. We must give their campaign a big send-off here at home; is that it?

MILDRED

Precisely. Henceforth, O domestic tyrant, the mystic sword of Anti-Matrimony must divide our bosoms!

ELLIOTT

Good! Me for "the mystics."

MILDRED

You for the Mats, and I for the Antis!

ELLIOTT

By the way, are we to be undomesticated simultaneously, or one at a time?

MILDRED

As to that, I must ask you to keep in close touch with me. I'll signal when I want trumps. Here they come. Now, then; play the game, and remember, Divided we stand!

ELLIOTT

United we fall!

[*Enter MORRIS and ISABELLE, at back.*]

MORRIS

[*To ISABELLE.*]

Here they are. Don't forget, you are to capture Elliott. Courage, now, for the cause.

ISABELLE

My misgivings are all for you, love.

ELLIOTT

[*To MILDRED, who has sunk upon the settee, staring ahead of her.*]

What's up now? Are you ill?

MILDRED

[*Just audibly, motioning him away.*]

Influenza! Catching!

ELLIOTT

Oh!

[*He crosses to the table. In the background, MORRIS—a Napoleon overseeing his campaign—directs ISABELLE, who goes to the bottom step of the stairs, gracefully and deliberately unties the bows of her shoe-lacings, then approaches ELLIOTT with ingratiating smile.*]

ISABELLE

Dear Elliott, will you be so kind as to tie my shoe-lace? It's come undone.

ELLIOTT

[*Momentarily abashed, scrambles to do so.*]

Charmed!

[*MORRIS, meantime, approaching MILDRED, starts visibly at her altered expression.*]

MORRIS

[*Solicitously.*]

Are you ill, Mildred? May I be of any service to you? [MILDRED continues to stare ahead of her, as in painful reverie.] Good heavens, I'm afraid you are. Perhaps it might—I have been thinking——

MILDRED

[In hollow tone.]

I, too!

MORRIS

I beg pardon.

MILDRED

[Slowly.]

I, too, have been thinking. *[Intense, she looks up at him.]*

ISABELLE

[To ELLIOTT, changing her foot.]

The other, please.

ELLIOTT

[Tying the lace.]

Delighted!

MILDRED

Your words have been ringing through my soul:
"A lie! A living lie!"

MORRIS

[Startled.]

Mildred!

MILDRED

[Rising.]

Maurice! You have come at an awful moment in
my life.

MORRIS

In your life!

MILDRED

Will you—will you lead me to the orchard?

[*Compelling him before her by look and gesture, she passes toward the outer door, while ISABELLE slowly turns, watching aghast, and ELLIOTT on his knees peeps round her skirts.*]

MORRIS

[*Bewildered.*]

Lead you to the——

MILDRED

Out there under the apple-bloom. Teach me, Maurice! Teach me the mystic symbol of the bees.

[*Taking the apple sprays from the vase, she pauses an instant on the door sill.*]

ELLIOTT

[*Open-mouthed.*]

Well, I'll be——

ISABELLE

So will I!

MILDRED

“A little commonwealth of natural lovers.”

[*Extending one hand to MORRIS, she buries her face in the apple-bloom. They go. ISABELLE starts to follow. ELLIOTT, still on his knees, holds absent-mindedly the shoe-lace he was tying.*]

ISABELLE

[*Tartly.*]

Leave go! Leave go!

[MILDRED *and* MORRIS *disappear in the orchard.*]

CURTAIN.

ACT II



ACT II

Late Afternoon.

[MRS. GREY stands in the middle of the room listening.]

MRS. GREY

Who spoke?

A VOICE

[*After a pause.*]

Have the trunks come?

MRS. GREY

[*Nervously.*]

Why, I think—would you mind saying where you are?

[MRS. GREY goes to the door left, opens it and stands flustered. Meantime the curtains of the stair landing are opened and ISABELLE puts her head out.]

ISABELLE

[*Snappishly.*]

I should think you could hear.

MRS. GREY

Oh, it's you, Isabelle.

ISABELLE

Yes, it's I. Will you please have the trunks sent up?

MRS. GREY

My dear, they haven't arrived from the steamship yet.

ISABELLE

How exasperating! Well, then, bring back my gown, please. I have nothing else to wear.

MRS. GREY

But, my dear——

ISABELLE

Don't wait to sponge it.

MRS. GREY

But, my dear, it isn't being sponged. It's being washed.

ISABELLE

Washed!

MRS. GREY

Yes; Mildred said you wanted it put in the tub.

ISABELLE

[*Shrilly.*]

Tub!

[*She disappears.*]

MRS. GREY

[Going up the stairs.]

It may be—perhaps I misunderstood Mildred—she told me she would explain later.

ISABELLE

[Coming out on the landing in a dressing-gown, speaks, on the point of tears.]

Do you mean to say— Why, it's ruined, then, ruined! In the tub!

MRS. GREY

I thought it rather peculiar. But of course you and Morris *are* peculiar, my dear.

ISABELLE

And I've no other dress with me.

MRS. GREY

Don't worry. Mildred has some pretty dresses.

ISABELLE

Mildred's—for me!

MRS. GREY

Just come with me to her room. She has laid out for you a pretty brown dress. Or perhaps you would prefer one of mine.

ISABELLE

Yours? Horrors!

[They disappear along the landing, left.]

[*Enter, from out of doors, MORRIS and MILDRED.*

MILDRED is dressed in a beautiful flowing gown of old rose, and wears apple-blossoms in her hair, which she has arranged in a graceful mediæval style, differing from its simple arrangement in Act First.]

MILDRED

Please go on. It is fascinating.

MORRIS

I haven't actually written the play, you know, but perhaps you would like to get some idea of the plot and symbolism.

MILDRED

Oh, please, yes. What do you call it?

MORRIS

The play? Well, I haven't quite decided. I've thought of several titles: "Spectres," "The Passionate Puritan," "Hosmer's Home; or, the Love of the Bee." Which do you like best?

MILDRED

Oh, I think "The Love of the Bee" is most beautiful.

[*MILDRED reclines, with studied æstheticism, on the cushions of the settee; MORRIS stands beside her.*]

MORRIS

Do you? So do I. Well, as I said, the hero, Hosmer, is an artist-philosopher; a superman, born with all the tragic advantages of genius. He is the last of an ancient house, and inherits a noble neurasthenia and subtle melancholia of character.

MILDRED

Neurasthenia, I understand, is the foundation of tragedy.

MORRIS

Absolutely. Hosmer is highly wrought, and his sensitive nature makes him shun all commonplace conflicts with life. His soul, like a silkworm, spins an exquisite chrysalis of its own mystic being to shroud it from the garish world. But this beautiful filament is rudely and suddenly torn by Destiny. He marries a wife.

MILDRED

I begin to see.

MORRIS

You know the type—forgive me for ever having associated *you* with it:—a woman hopelessly wholesome, obtusely moral, blindly domestic, hideously fond of a joke.

MILDRED

I know: the kind with incurably good digestion.

MORRIS

That's it. Well, this abnormally healthy woman is hung by fate like a mill-stone round the neck of Hosmer. Her sunny disposition (as the *old* school used to call it), her red-cheeked laughter, her unshakable nerves—these fail utterly to develop the psychic powers of the superman. Slowly but surely he declines into a happy contentment with her normal view of things. Step by step his tragic genius is undermined. At last she even makes him see a flaw in his own masterpiece—and she laughs at him. But listen! At that very moment, a single knock resounds on the ancestral knocker, and enter—Amorata!

MILDRED

Masterly!

MORRIS

That's the curtain of Act First.

MILDRED

Amorata, of course, is the superwoman.

MORRIS

Yes. She symbolizes the psychic emanation of the oversoul, the embodied spirit of Anti-Matrimony. She enters palely beautiful, wearing a swarm of bees.

MILDRED

A whole swarm! But is that practical?

MORRIS

It's symbolical. She wears them in clusters, at climaxes. ✓

MILDRED

Oh!

MORRIS

Amorata, then, enters—superb, erotic, divinely pathological. She saves Hosmer at the dramatic instant, reawakens the artistic vacillation of his will, and restores him to perfect self-approval of his masterpiece.

MILDRED

What is his masterpiece?

MORRIS

It's—I haven't decided that either. A bell tower, I think, or a painting; either some pinnacle that he can fall down from, or some portrait that he can hack to pieces. My last three acts, you see, are not settled yet. We must consult the Masters carefully.

MILDRED

It is so kind of you to want me to collaborate.

MORRIS

Not at all.

MILDRED

Are there any other characters?

MORRIS

Yes, I have in mind several—a morphine patient, an inebriate pastor, a suicidal doctor, a tubercular poet, a kleptomaniac and some others.

MILDRED

Are none of them—quite well?

MORRIS

Only the wife, for contrast. Undiseased persons are essentially undramatic.

MILDRED

I see. I suppose, then, you must take care not to let your characters meet each other, for fear of infection.

MORRIS

Not at all. My characters have only those highly artistic diseases adapted to modern technique. What puzzles me, however, is how to bring them all to the mill-race.

MILDRED

The mill-race; what's that?

MORRIS

That's the final catastrophe. It's the water, you know, that leads to the mill-wheel. My chief characters, of course, must all be drowned there.

MILDRED

By accident?

MORRIS

No, indeed; by inheritance. Inheritance is the modern form of fate, you know. But the minor persons still puzzle me. Which do *you* prefer—death by paraneic insanity, or pistol shot? ✓

MILDRED

Oh, pistol shot, please! Of all thrilling effects, I think, a pistol shot—off the scene, just before the curtain falls—is the most delightful.

MORRIS

You are extremely helpful, Mildred. I don't remember that Isabelle ever gave me such illuminating criticisms.

MILDRED

Why, Isabelle *is* just a little immature, don't you think? I mean—to appreciate fully your problems as a dramatist.

MORRIS

I have often thought that.

MILDRED

After all, she is only nineteen. And there is an impassable gulf between the teens and the twenties, isn't there?

MORRIS

There's a lot to what you say.

MILDRED

I was thinking just now—It's such a beautiful coincidence.

MORRIS

What?

MILDRED

[*Dreamily.*]

Oh, nothing.

MORRIS

Please tell me!

MILDRED

Well, I was just thinking how mystical it is that you and I—of all this household—are the only ones in our twenties.

MORRIS

By Jove! That's so.

MILDRED

Elliott is thirty-one.

MORRIS

So he is.

MILDRED

Ah! There is so much in the subtle affiliations of time.

MORRIS

Affiliations of time! Mildred, you're wonderful. You seem to have developed since this morning.

MILDRED

Thanks to you—my master!

MORRIS

I always suspected that underneath your cold New England restraint there lurked a bright naiad of the beautiful old world.

MILDRED

A nix in the home mill-pond, you mean? Yes, but it needed a mystical fisher like yourself to lure the naiad to the surface, and reveal to her visions of the sunset and the stars. But now you mustn't stop; you must teach me your whole secret—how I may free my soul completely from this narrow world that has sealed my eyes so long.

MORRIS

Be exceptional, Mildred; dare to be different—at all costs.

MILDRED

[*Pensively.*]

Dare to be different.

MORRIS

Deny the gross dictates of society, the tyranny of others.

MILDRED

[*Murmurs.*]

The tyranny of husbands.

MORRIS

Realize yourself. Be an individual—free, self-poised, unique.

MILDRED

O, Maurice, I see it all now; the beauty of being unique. I have never realized before how exceptional, how beautiful I am. I have been blinded—by Elliott. He has forced me to lead a life which has taught me to forget the very aim of existence—my own soul, myself.

MORRIS

Do you know why? It's because he has made you the victim of his own dark inheritance:—he has allowed himself and you to be guided by ghosts.

MILDRED

Ghosts! You are right. You have shown me this home of mine for what it really is—a charnel house, in which my soul sits mated to a spectre. I see it now. This hearthstone—it was here he led me home—his living bride. This haunted house—what is it but the hollow chamber of a skull, musty with dead creeds, every window a staring, vacant eye, every gable a Puritan's peaked hat? Oh, forgive me this outburst! But do you wonder that the mere thought of Elliott awakens in me feelings—impossible to express!

MORRIS

Mildred——

MILDRED

You have turned a searchlight into my soul and shown me my own hopelessness.

MORRIS

No, Mildred, not hopelessness, but hope; the hope of anti-matrimony. Think of all that holds out to you—uniqueness, tragedy, scorn of the common world! All, all are yours, if you only dare.

MILDRED

Oh, Maurice, may I indeed lay my soul bare to you, without shame or fear of rebuke?

MORRIS

How can you ask? Of course; confide in me.

MILDRED

No, I'm afraid; not till you promise you will forgive me when you have heard all.

MORRIS

But how can I, Mildred, before I know all?

MILDRED

[*Rushing away.*]

Good-by! Good-by!

MORRIS

Mildred, come back. I promise—whatever it is.

MILDRED

Whatever it is—you'll forgive?

MORRIS

I promise.

MILDRED

[Returning slowly.]

That gives me courage. You ought never to have come. You ought never to have awakened my soul.

MORRIS

Don't say that. I am proud of that. Tell me all—everything.

MILDRED

I have deceived you, Maurice.

MORRIS

Deceived me—you!

MILDRED

I am deceiving you now.

MORRIS

Mildred! How is it possible?

MILDRED

Listen! I shall continue to deceive you, unless—unless you should guess. Look in my eyes. Do you guess? *Do you guess?*

MORRIS

You don't mean that I—that you——

MILDRED

Wait. Hear me. I will confess all. I am a wife—twenty-seven—married five years. Until yesterday I thought myself happy, truthful, innocent. Yesterday you arrived from Europe. Almost the first word from your lips,—that daring, scornful, *truthful* avowal of your relations with Isabelle—ah, it was electric! It filled me with a new and dangerous delight. It revolutionized my home and hearth. Oh, at first, of course, I pretended to be shocked. I even gave you foolish domestic advice—asked you to marry Isabelle, you remember.

MORRIS

Don't, Mildred! Don't imagine I hold that against you now.

MILDRED

I don't; it's not that. [*Sitting at the table.*] It's—it's—how shall I confess it? After you left me alone in the orchard—I went and sat me down by the mill-pond, thinking—thinking wildly. Your voice was still in my ears, and the music of anti-matrimony! Then I gazed in the dark waters and beheld there—can you guess?

MORRIS

Your image.

MILDRED

The image of a dissembling wife, a deceiving sister, a hypocritical friend. Now, now do you guess?

MORRIS

You bewilder me, Mildred.

MILDRED

[*Rising.*]

In pity's name, do not say that you—my deliverer—fail to understand!

MORRIS

No, no. I understand perfectly of course. But——

MILDRED

Surely you, of all men, can read my mystic thoughts and sympathize.

MORRIS

My poor girl! I begin to see.

MILDRED

I knew you would.

MORRIS

Since yesterday—only yesterday! In less than twenty-four hours!

MILDRED

A moment may be an immortality.

MORRIS

And it came like that?

MILDRED

[*Murmurs.*]

Just like that.

MORRIS

In the very moment, you say, when I first spoke to you?

MILDRED

[*Exaltedly.*]

In your mouth were the thunders of emancipation, and on your lips the lightnings of deliverance.

MORRIS

It's all so sudden—so splendidly tragic. Desperate child, what are you to do?

MILDRED

Do you ask me that?—you!

MORRIS

I mean, how are you going to announce it?

MILDRED

Announce it! Is it not enough that *you* know that *I* know—that we alone know?

MORRIS

[With abrupt decision.]

No, Mildred, the announcement of this tragic case will strengthen my campaign. The declaration of your secret passion for me will help to rally others to my banner. You must declare it.

MILDRED

But my husband—your own brother; Isabelle—my sister. Such relationships! What will the world say?

MORRIS

My child, it is glorious! The relationships are classic; the tragic conflict is perfect. And the world—the world will revile us!

MILDRED

[Sinking on the settee.]

Ah, but you are a man and brave. I am weak and a woman.

MORRIS

Not now! Now you are neither weak, nor a woman—you are an Anti-Mat.

MILDRED

I know, Maurice. But consider how long I have lived the life of a Mat—abject, trodden underfoot. You can't expect me to rise all alone on my own hearthstone and be spurned by the foot of my oppressor.

MORRIS

Alone! Of course not. Where you rise, a whole army of Anti-Mats will flock to our standard.

[ELLIOTT *appears outside, quietly passing.*]

MILDRED

[*Crying out and pointing.*]

Ah! There he is.

[ELLIOTT *precipitately disappears.*]

MORRIS

Who?

MILDRED

Elliott. There in the orchard. What if he should see us!

MORRIS

Let him come.

MILDRED

No, no. I'm afraid. Consider; he is my husband. And you—you know what you are to me. Have pity.

MORRIS

Poor, infatuated child! Why do you seek refuge in cowardice?

MILDRED

The spirit of Anti-Matrimony forsakes me. I need time—wisdom.

MORRIS

Remember what Zarathustra, the master, has said: "Be brave, indifferent, scornful, violent—thus wisdom would have us to be." Be violent, Mildred! This is your tragic moment. Be true to the Masters.

MILDRED

You are right. I need violence. [*Rising, speaks with increasing "violence."*] Go—bring them. I will be true to them.

MORRIS

Bring them?

MILDRED

The Masters. Upstairs. Go. Bring down the dress-suit case. Bring me the Masters, Maurice.

MORRIS

[*Hastening up the stairs.*]

Mildred!—I will.

[*MORRIS disappears from the landing. MILDRED sinks upon the settee cushions in muffled laughter. Enter at back, ELLIOTT.*]

ELLIOTT

[*In a low voice, saluting with his right hand.*]
Orders, Captain? How's the wind?

MILDRED

[*Catching her breath.*]

East-nor-west due southerly.

ELLIOTT

Are those your sailing instructions?

MILDRED

Yes, sir. *I* now am headed, full sail, for the Emancipation Isles, and you, mate, are bound for the Haven of Home and the Straits of Separation.

ELLIOTT

But I thought *you* had me in tow.

MILDRED

No, sir, you're cut loose. So remember; whenever the Morris is in sight, you must fly matrimonial colors and steer port, and whenever you spy the Isabelle, you must fly the Anti-Mat flag and run starboard.

ELLIOTT

And what if I sight them both at once?

MILDRED

Why, then, steer both ways at once and send up a signal of distress.

ELLIOTT

Hold on, my dear! Do you expect a mere minister of the gospel to be your co-star in this advanced vaudeville?

MILDRED

I do, old stupid. Don't you see? To Isabelle you're an Anti, and to Morris and me you're a Mat.

ELLIOTT

Kind of a reversible Persian rug. Is that it?

MILDRED

Exactly. Topside up, you're the perfect pattern of a husband; upside down, you're a mystical lover.

ELLIOTT

How about wrong side out?

[Enter, left, ISABELLE. She wears a shrunken, faded, brown dress, awkwardly misfitting and unbecoming. This contrasts absurdly with the extra pains she has bestowed upon the towering, complicated architecture of her hair. Seeing ELLIOTT and MILDRED, she hesitates, embarrassed and woeful. ELLIOTT, facing the other way, does not see her. MILDRED, instantly altering her voice to one of pained accusation, continues to speak to ELLIOTT, who stares at her in fresh bewilderment.]

MILDRED

No, Elliott! After five years of married life together—five years, in which I have sacrificed my soul to your narrow interests—after five long years, I think I have the right to expect of you——

ELLIOTT

What the devil——

MILDRED

[*With horrified tone.*]

Please!—don't give way to one of your outbursts of profanity. Remember you are a minister.

ELLIOTT

Ministers get their livelihood from the devil, my dear. It's only Christian to allude to him.

[*Above, on the landing, enters MORRIS, carrying a dress-suit case. He pauses to look down; then listens intently. Meantime, ISABELLE—who does not see him—manifests also an eager detective interest in the conversation.*]

MILDRED

Oh, don't, don't! Don't make me a partner in this hypocrisy.

ELLIOTT

Hypocrisy!

MILDRED

You wear one face toward the world, and another in your home. For five years I have wasted my youth, I have repressed my personality, I have concealed my art—and all for this!

ELLIOTT

Do you mean to accuse me of——

MILDRED

Oh, I don't accuse you. I may be wrong. Heaven grant that I am. I only say that when I see this sudden infatuation——

ELLIOTT

Infat——

MILDRED

Before my very eyes, I cannot be silent. I will only ask why you should have chosen *that* dress of all others! [ELLIOTT *turns and discovers* ISABELLE.] I will only remind you how you once said you loved that dress for my sake. You gave me that dress on my wedding anniversary, and now—and now——

ISABELLE

[*Coming forward wildly.*]

You *know* why I wear it. You *know*!

MILDRED

And now she confesses! Yes, Isabelle, I know in-

deed why you wear it. I know, yet I will not accuse you either. O my husband—my sister! Heaven be just to us all.

[She rushes out, right.]

ISABELLE

[Calling after her.]

The trunks—you know—I've got nothing else——

MORRIS

[Hurrying down the stairs with the dress-suit case.]

Mildred!

ISABELLE

[Trying to conceal her dress by standing behind the settee.]

Maurice! Did you overhear her?

MORRIS

[Stopping and looking severely from ISABELLE to ELLIOTT.]

Yes.

ELLIOTT

[To himself.]

Starboard—port!

MORRIS

I overheard all—all!

ISABELLE

I—I haven't seen anything of you for hours.

*[Suddenly seeing the dress-suit case, steps forward
with a cry.]*

Oh!—Where are you taking that?

MORRIS

Why are you wearing that?

ISABELLE

[Tearfully.]

Mine's in the tub.

MORRIS

In the tub!

ISABELLE

The trunks—You're not taking that to *her*?

MORRIS

Why did you put it in?

ISABELLE

I didn't—the Masters—the Masters are in it.

MORRIS

In the tub?

ISABELLE

No, in the suit-case, I said. Don't prevaricate, Maurice. The Masters are in there.

ELLIOTT

Perhaps if I might arbitrate this——

MORRIS

[*To ELLIOTT.*]

You! You that for five years—ha! This gown, I understand, is a favorite of yours. Do you deny it?

ELLIOTT

Dear me, no! I own to a very ancient partiality——

ISABELLE

Won't you answer me? Are you taking this to Mildred?

MORRIS

Certainly. She is developing wonderfully. Her open-mindedness is magnificent. I have every hope of making her an Anti. I only wish that I could account for this astonishing change in you, Isabelle.

ISABELLE

[*Moving farther from ELLIOTT.*]

Oh, Maurice! Don't you understand? Don't let him hear.

MORRIS

[*Glancing back at ELLIOTT.*]

Him? Oh, I see. You mean you wear this to convert him to our campaign? His favorite gown. Clever girl!

ISABELLE

[*Dolefully.*]

Oh, no, no!

MORRIS

[*Sternly.*]

What, then, do you mean?

ISABELLE

I mean the Masters—my favorite passages—they're underlined. You *mustn't* let her see them.

MORRIS

Isabelle, you are utterly transformed. I will not ask your secret motive in selecting this gown; I leave that to your conscience. I cannot discuss it further.

[*Going out, at right, with the suit-case.*]

Mildred!

ISABELLE

Maurice!—Stop him—What shall I do?

ELLIOTT

My dear Isabelle, it has appealed to me strangely for years. I remember originally the stuff was a bargain.

ISABELLE

Don't allude to it.

ELLIOTT

Certainly not. I only mean that I appreciate your thought of me in wearing it.

ISABELLE

I never thought of you. [*Looking after MORRIS.*]
Oh, it's beyond words!

ELLIOTT

[*Looking her over.*]

Yes; I think it is.

ISABELLE

But I won't stand it. If I am to be falsely suspected, insulted—I'll have my revenge.

ELLIOTT

You were kind enough, my dear, to say that you would instruct me in the principles of Anti-Matrimony.

ISABELLE

Did I? I believe I did.

ELLIOTT

I can promise you shall find me an attentive disciple. Will you begin—now?

ISABELLE

No, please. We'll postpone that. I should like, instead, to—to ask you a favor.

ELLIOTT

Delighted! As a Mat or an Anti?

ISABELLE

Oh, neither. I should just like to ask if you would mind being—well, pleasant.

ELLIOTT

Oh! Pleasant!

ISABELLE

To me, you know. I mean as pleasant as you know how—whenever Maurice is around.

ELLIOTT

Attentive, you mean?

ISABELLE

Attentive—without intention. You understand.

ELLIOTT

Unintentionally attentive.

ISABELLE

No, no, I mean—will you please be particularly pleasant, without being painful?

ELLIOTT

My dear Isabelle, that has been the unattainable dream of my life.

ISABELLE

You mean you can't be pleasant to me?

ELLIOTT

Moderately, my dear. I will be moderately pleasant to the point of passion. But I know that I shall fall short of being particularly pleasant without pain.

ISABELLE

Well, that will do nicely. Thank you.

[She starts to go.]

ELLIOTT

Won't you wait, and let me moderately please you?

ISABELLE

Oh, it's of no importance now. Only just the moment Maurice and Mildred are near us—then begin.

ELLIOTT

Hadn't I better stay with you, then?

ISABELLE

Perhaps you had. Suppose you read aloud to me in the orchard.

ELLIOTT

Delighted. Some of my own books?

ISABELLE

Yes, that will be just the thing.

[He goes to the book-shelves and selects some volumes.]

ELLIOTT

These, now, I feel sure will please you—moderately.

ISABELLE

How nice of you. What are they?

ELLIOTT

Here, my dear, take your choice: "The Sermons of Theodore Parker," "The Life of Channing," "Essays on Irrigation and Social Ethics," "Self-Help versus Humanitarianism," "Sociological Investigations in the Slum Districts of——"

[*They disappear in the orchard. After a moment, enter from the right MORRIS and MILDRED.*]

MORRIS

If I have been able to help you——

MILDRED

Help me? You have created me anew. You found me a matrimonial atom, lost in the collective mass of a myriad wives; and you have made me an individual.

MORRIS

You have been so responsive, Mildred.

MILDRED

Oh, to be at last an individual—singular—except—

tional—solely myself! To know that the centuries and the civilizations have existed merely for this: to evolve me—mystic, immeasurable *me*!

MORRIS

Now you speak like a true artist.

MILDRED

An artist! Ah, that reminds me. I have never told you, have I?

MORRIS

What?

MILDRED

What I really am. Oh, you will encourage me, won't you? You will help me to be—what I really am?

MORRIS

I am proud to help you.

MILDRED

Maurice, I really am——

MORRIS

What, Mildred?

MILDRED

A danseuse. All my life I have concealed it. Only occasionally, at picnics and birthday parties, I have given way to the divine instinct, and dazzled my bewildered partner in the two-step. At all other times my imprisoned genius has struggled like a captive

fawn for freedom. But what hope has an artist with a husband and a home!

MORRIS

I know.

MILDRED

Matrimony and the fine arts are mutually exclusive. What could I do? I simply sacrificed Terpsychore on the altar of Elliott.

MORRIS

But not now, Mildred. Never again.

MILDRED

[*Going to the phonograph and winding it.*]

No, not now. For you have taught me to realize myself. Henceforward I will be *me*—Mildred, the danseuse. Listen! Do you know those strains?

MORRIS

“The Merry Widow.”

MILDRED

Will you waltz with me?

MORRIS

Now? Here?

MILDRED

Here and now. You have struck off the last of my shackles. Let me revel in my emancipation.

MORRIS

Mildred, you are superb.

MILDRED

Dance!

[To the strains of the phonograph they waltz together. As they do so, ISABELLE and ELLIOTT reappear from the orchard, ISABELLE hastening ahead, ELLIOTT following with an open book in his hands.]

ISABELLE

[On the threshold, dropping the other volumes from her arms.]

I was sure of it. It's they!

ELLIOTT

[Reading aloud.]

"As far as we are able to determine the sociological aspects——"

ISABELLE

Stop it; begin: be pleasant.

ELLIOTT

[Cheerfully.]

How delightfully they waltz!

ISABELLE

No, no; to *me*—to *me*.

[Enter, left, MRS. GREY.]

MRS. GREY

My dears! The phonograph—it will wake the baby.

[MILDRED and MORRIS, *heedless, continue to dance.*]

ISABELLE

They're perfectly shameless—Mildred!

ELLIOTT

Morris! I wish to expostulate——

MRS. GREY

Children—the dust—the baby——

ISABELLE

[*With flashing eyes, shuts off the phonograph.*]

Mildred, what does this mean—this amazing behavior?

ELLIOTT

Yes, my love, this extraordinary change?

MILDRED

[*Pausing.*]

Mean, my friends? It means I am no longer a Mat.

MRS. GREY

She is ill.

MILDRED

This is the moment of my emancipation. The chains of my Puritan ancestors fall from me. Yet

still I hesitate. One doubt alone keeps me from claiming the fulness of my freedom.

MORRIS

A doubt, Mildred?

MILDRED

[*With piercing scrutiny.*]

Answer me. Is there no bond of convention between you and that woman? None?

MORRIS

[*Ignoring a gesture of supplication from ISABELLE.*]

N-none whatever.

MILDRED

[*To ISABELLE.*]

And you, O woman: Is there no legal tie between you and this man?

ISABELLE

[*Transfixed by the eyes of MORRIS.*]

Of—of course not.

[*Turning to ELLIOTT.*]

For heaven's sake, be pleasant!

MILDRED

Then I hesitate no more. I declare myself. Sister, husband, mother—good-by! You are ghosts, ghosts—all! Into the living commonwealth of free lovers, I elect myself.

MRS. GREY

It's turned her head—Elliott!

MILDRED

Maurice—you that have delivered me out of the bondage of matrimony, you that have mystically shown me the tragic spirit, you that have made me a superwoman—see! At last I dare: I love you; dance with me again.

[*At a sign from her, ELLIOTT has touched the lever of the phonograph, which resumes "The Merry Widow."*]

ISABELLE

[*Crying out, as MORRIS goes toward MILDRED.*]
Maurice!

[*MORRIS pauses.*]

MRS. GREY

[*Aghast.*]

Morris!

ELLIOTT

[*Stentorian.*]

Morris!

MILDRED

[*Holding out her arms.*]

Maurice!

[*MORRIS waltzes with MILDRED.*]

CURTAIN.

ACT III



ACT III

[*Night: The room is lighted by lamps and the glow from a wood fire in the fireplace. MILDRED and ELLIOTT are discovered, and for some moments nothing is said. MILDRED is seated on the rug before the fire; ELLIOTT stands by the desk. MILDRED is dressed in a splendid black gown, with train, low neck and short sleeves; she wears one flaming red rose and her hair is arranged with striking tragedy-queen effectiveness. At the moment of discovery she is seated upon her long train, bending over the open dress-suit case, in and about which are piled sundry volumes, some open, others closed, with bookmarks. These volumes she is putting back in the suit-case; as she does so, she scans the marked pages hastily, and makes memoranda with a pencil upon a large pad in her lap. Meantime, at the desk, ELLIOTT is solemnly engaged in loading two pistols. From a small tin box he lifts cartridges and inserts them gingerly, one by one, making various aims and passes with each pistol, fixing his attention—with muttered ejaculations—upon a central spot in the rug.*]

ELLIOTT

[*As he begins to load the second pistol.*]

Two?

MILDRED

[*Looking up.*]

Both.

ELLIOTT

Is there need of more than one?

MILDRED

Positively. It's in my notes. Here— [*turning to her pad*] —here it is: [*Reads.*] “The agents of ruin are a brace of old cavalry pistols, cunningly prepared.” A brace: plural. You see.

ELLIOTT

Right you are! “Cunningly prepared.” It's not for me to dispute the Masters.

[*Both continue their occupations, until MILDRED has put all the books into the dress-suit case.*]

MILDRED

Dearie.

ELLIOTT

Hello!

MILDRED

Help me up.

ELLIOTT

[Assisting her to rise, kisses her.]

How gorgeous we are!

MILDRED

[Returning his caress.]

Aren't we?

ELLIOTT

Where did you hire the dressmaker?

MILDRED

In the attic.

ELLIOTT

The attic!

MILDRED

In the charade-chest. There's more wonders yet.
Wait till the climax.

ELLIOTT

I thought that came this afternoon with the waltz.

MILDRED

Not a bit. That didn't explode the catastrophe.
I've been boiling 'em down.

ELLIOTT

Boiling what down?

MILDRED

The catastrophes. Here. *[She hands him the pad.]*

ELLIOTT

[*Reads from it, while MILDRED examines the pistols.*]

“Suicide: pistols, coal-gas, drowning (mill-race preferred). Desertion, divorce, insanity, general disintegration, cataleptic hysteria——”

MILDRED

Don’t bother to read them all. Morris has chosen the best of ’em. Here!

ELLIOTT

[*Taking from her a manuscript.*]

What’s this?

MILDRED

The scenario of Morris’s play: “Hosmer’s Home, or The Love of the Bee.” He’s selected the mill-race, and, on the whole, I believe that’s the best.

ELLIOTT

Do you really know what you’re talking about?

MILDRED

Yes, nice old partner; but you don’t! Anyway, you’re a sweet, patient old thing to help me give this little vaudeville lesson to the young folks. I appreciate it awfully, and I promise to help *you* with a lot of parish business before midnight.

ELLIOTT

Well, my dear, there really is a lot of community work waiting for me. There's the tenement commission, and the swamp-land reclamation——

MILDRED

All in good time! We've got to reclaim the family first. You and I now are a commission of non-sense to restore common sense to two little numbskulls. Isabelle must learn to mind the baby, and Morris, you know, must learn to say "Shucks!" again.

ELLIOTT

Capital! Only please inform me how all this hodge-podge of pistols and "Hosmer's Home——"

MILDRED

Of course. I'll teach you the plot—cues and all.

ELLIOTT

That's some comfort.

MILDRED

You know, dear, you always were good at Dumb Crambo and Christmas charades; so you'll learn. It's like this: When you hear me calling outside, "Hosmer!"—like that—"Hosmer!"——

[*Enter, left, MRS. GREY.*]

Heavens! here's mother. Go to my room. I'll come in a few minutes and rehearse it with you.

ELLIOTT

Rehearse it?

MILDRED

Here, take my pad and study.

MRS. GREY

Elliott!

ELLIOTT

[*With repression, looking toward MILDRED for orders.*]

Good-evening, mother.

MILDRED

[*To ELLIOTT, sternly.*]

Go, go!

[*ELLIOTT retires solemnly toward the outer door.*]

MRS. GREY

[*Wringing her hands.*]

O Mildred! You're not parting with Elliott forever?

MILDRED

Naughty motherkin! Now you're playing truant. You know I told you to stay quietly in your room till to-morrow morning; then I'll explain everything to you—very slowly.

MRS. GREY

I know you always *do* explain, Mildred. But this time I was afraid—I'm afraid—you're too ill to explain.

MILDRED

[*Smiling.*]

Do I look it?

MRS. GREY

Oh, yes, my child. I have never seen you look like this before. And this afternoon—your clothes, your behavior, your—your unusual words to Elliott. You know, I have heard—yes, I have heard, that when people act like that—when they dance and dress and—and behave like that—it's hysterics!

MILDRED

Fiddle, my dear! It's not hysterics—it's just charades.

MRS. GREY

Charades! I never thought of charades.

MILDRED

Don't you remember this gown in the attic chest?

MRS. GREY

Yes, but—yes, but then, my dear—if it's—if it's charades, where's the curtain, and who—who looks on and does the guessing?

MILDRED

You, dear, of course; haven't you been guessing?

MRS. GREY

Why—why, yes. But not—not a *word*. You never told me how many syllables to guess, or——

MILDRED

Elliott will tell you all about it. Run along with him. And whatever happens, don't worry ; just guess.

ELLIOTT

Come on, Mammy.

MILDRED

And remember ! You're not to go near Isabelle, or the baby, on any account.

MRS. GREY

Oh, Elliott, I'm still afraid she is ill.

[*Exeunt* MRS. GREY and ELLIOTT, *left*. MILDRED goes to the desk, where she puts the pistols in a leathern case, and closes it. Enter, at back, MORRIS.]

MORRIS

Ah !

MILDRED

Hosmer !

MORRIS

Amorata !

MILDRED

How natural it seems to be called by that name ! Since you have made me—what I really am, I feel as if I were a part of your masterpiece.

MORRIS

So you are. Art which is not experienced is worthless. Every true dramatist lives his play. Amorata, you are divine!

MILDRED

You like me in this? It expresses, I think, the tragic spirit. ✓

MORRIS

Superbly! She must dress like that in the third act.

MILDRED

She? You mean, I! You will let me act Amorata—won't you?—when she's finished?

MORRIS

Oh, if you would, Mild—I mean, Amorata!

MILDRED

You know it requires a danseuse, for she must dance the Tarantella.

MORRIS

Yes, like Nora. I thought that would be striking; don't you?

MILDRED

Oh, of all things—yes! You can see the suggestions I've made in your scenario—on the margin. I've been through the whole suit-case.

MORRIS

[*Anxiously.*]

Have you? Well, and what do you think?

MILDRED

My Hosmer, I think you have *outdone* the Masters.

MORRIS

[*With visible pleasure.*]

I hope you're not flattering. I value your critical opinion more than any one's.

MILDRED

Even than—Isabelle's?

MORRIS

Isabelle was never truly critical. Besides, she has strangely altered. I don't understand it.

MILDRED

[*Naïvely.*]

I wonder if *I* am to blame.

MORRIS

You? How?

MILDRED

Perhaps—somehow I feel—she does not quite approve of my outspoken attitude toward you.

MORRIS

Do you mean she has expressed her disapproval?

MILDRED

Oh, not directly. But I am afraid she misjudges me, Hosmer. I'm afraid she considers my artlessness artful, and my innocent boldness immodest. Indeed, I hate to believe it, but I fear that her soul is conventional.

MORRIS

I'm afraid so, too. I have feared it for some time. Oh, it's terrible!

MILDRED

But why, Hosmer? Why to *you*? Her narrow ideas can never affect *your* freedom.

MORRIS

You do not know.

MILDRED

Fortunately, you do not stand in the awful shadow of a wife, as I do of a husband.

MORRIS

[*Nervously.*]

A wife! Amorata, do not speak of this again.

MILDRED

Hosmer, you alarm me. You look haggard—ill—

MORRIS

Oh, it is nothing. Only, if sometimes you detect in me a brooding melancholy, or a sudden wildness, you

must forgive me, but never ask its cause. It's only the fingers of old ghosts upon me.

MILDRED

But you—I thought you had escaped them—defied them?

MORRIS

Who can escape from the haunting sins of his past? After all, I could never have the tragic spirit otherwise. A past is the birthright of every true artist.

MILDRED

You are right. I, too, have a secret which is heavy to keep.

MORRIS

But I guessed it: your passion for me.

MILDRED

It is even deeper than that.

MORRIS

Deeper! But, then, you will tell it to me! [*Enter ISABELLE. He is about to seize MILDRED's hand.*] Amorata, I beg——

MILDRED

Hush! The shadow of destiny falls on us!

ISABELLE

[*The once proud architecture of her hair is now in ruins, and in one hand she holds an apron, which she has just removed from her borrowed misfit gown. In a choking voice she speaks to MILDRED.*]

Hypocrite!

MILDRED

Farewell! [*She ascends the stairs to the landing.*]
Farewell! I leave you—together.

ISABELLE

Stop! [*Exit MILDRED.*] Come back! Oh, it's not fair. She *always* runs away. She doesn't *dare* to face me.

MORRIS

It seems to me she has shown more courage than you.

ISABELLE

Courage! She has shown the courage of a brazen adventuress. She has left me helpless and alone. She has dismissed both the maids for a holiday, and your mother's nowhere to be found, and I've had to mind the baby, all by myself, for hours.

MORRIS

If you *will* give way to such domestic instincts——

ISABELLE

Could I let it choke with screaming? Courage! I tell you, Maurice, *I* have shown courage, while my heartless sister has stolen the gown from my back, and the hair from my head, and the husband——

MORRIS

Stop! Don't speak that word.

ISABELLE

And all the while pluming herself like a bird-of-paradise to bamboozle you.

MORRIS

Bamboozle me. Ha!

ISABELLE

Yes, bamboozle you. O Maurice, how easily you have been deceived by an artful woman!

MORRIS

[*Darkly.*]

I am beginning to think so, Isabelle.

ISABELLE

Thank heaven, then, your eyes are opening at last.

MORRIS

Thank heaven, indeed—even though it's heart-breaking.

ISABELLE

Heart-breaking! So it's gone as far as that?

MORRIS

Almost, Isabelle. But I shan't let it go any farther, now that you have made me to see through you.

ISABELLE

Through *me*! Through Mildred, you mean.

MORRIS

No, *you*. Ever since that hour in Vienna, when the maid-servant left, and you cried to go home to America, I have suspected it—dreaded it. Now you have convinced me. In your heart of hearts, you are *not* an Anti—you are a *Mat*!

ISABELLE

How can you say such a dreadful thing!

MORRIS

I will prove it. Answer me this: Are you not jealous of Mildred?

ISABELLE

Jealous?

MORRIS

Of her devotion to me?

ISABELLE

[*Tearfully.*]

Yes, Maurice. I am. I own I am.

MORRIS

Listen to that! Where now is your consecration to our campaign?—to free love? to my career? to the works of the Masters? Have you forgotten my play—my mystic symbol, “The Love of the Bee”? This very morning you called it beautiful.

ISABELLE

Indeed, but it is!

MORRIS

I brought you apple-blossoms. Now they are faded. So be it. Yet the symbol still blooms on, and I am the Bee.

ISABELLE

Oh, no, Maurice. I never understood it so. I am the Bee.

MORRIS

You—you!

ISABELLE

Oh, yes. I always *was* the Bee.

MORRIS

Good God! Did you take me for an apple-blossom? And you have pretended to be a mystic!

ISABELLE

I am; I am a mystic.

MORRIS

Why, you’ve got the symbolism all mixed up.

ISABELLE

I don't care. Mystic things always are mixed.
How else could they be beautiful?

MORRIS

Don't try to argue, Isabelle. You are incapable of it. Remember, you are only nineteen, and your immature mind shows in sad contrast with your sister's extraordinary——

ISABELLE

Mildred again! Your head is hipped with Mildred. Can't you see that she has been deceiving you?

MORRIS

Of course. She confessed that almost immediately.

ISABELLE

She confessed it!

MORRIS

Certainly. She admitted that she was trying to conceal her infatuation for me. She had to, for I read her thoughts.

ISABELLE

Foolish boy! What do you know of woman's thoughts?

MORRIS

Everything. I am a dramatist.

ISABELLE

Just stop to think, Maurice. Only this morning she called us both "silly children" for practising Anti-Matrimony. And now she pretends to practise it herself. Doesn't that show you how paradoxical she is?

MORRIS

Of course; it shows me how great—how progressive—how modern she is. Paradox is the standard of progress. Only the vulgar mind is consistent.

ISABELLE

Do you forget the old proverb——

MORRIS

Proverbs, my dear, are relics of the past. Modern truths are inverted proverbs. I learned that from the Masters long ago.

ISABELLE

Oh, dear, then, I won't try to argue. I know how much wiser and deeper you are. Only, beloved, I will appeal to our vows to each other. Don't you love me—don't you love me any more?

MORRIS

I don't see what that has to do with Mildred. I can't help it if you both love me.

ISABELLE

But she doesn't love you ; not as I do. Look at me, Maurice. Don't you remember how we stood here together, and you called me so many beautiful names?

MORRIS

Yes. But they don't seem to apply to you now. Somehow a different atmosphere seems to cling about you.

ISABELLE

[*Wretchedly.*]

Oh, this dress!

MORRIS

[*Suspiciously.*]

I did not mention it. Yet I notice you still wear it, in spite of my appeal to your conscience. Presumably, my brother——

ISABELLE

Elliott has been——

MORRIS

I see! Elliott has been the reason. Isabelle, you have turned traitor to our cause. Instead of winning him over to our principles, as you promised me, you are allowing him to corrupt you to his.

ISABELLE

Not at all. Elliott has been the only kind person in the house to me. No one else has come near me. He came and rocked Cynthia for half an hour——

MORRIS

Elliott rocked Cynthia. Indeed!

ISABELLE

[*With increasing tearfulness.*]

And before that he read me an essay on "Sociological Investigations in the Slum Districts of Our Larger——"

MORRIS

So! Filled your mind with slumming and domesticity! And what else does Elliott do for you?

[*Enter, left, ELLIOTT.*]

ELLIOTT

Here are the stockings, my dear.

ISABELLE

[*Taking from him a pair of baby's socks.*]
Oh, thanks.

ELLIOTT

They're both mended.

MORRIS

By *you*?

ELLIOTT

[*To ISABELLE.*]

Mother urges you to put them on Cynthia at once.

ISABELLE

I'm sure I thank *you*, Elliott.

[*Exit.*]

MORRIS

[*Looking after her, in astonishment.*]

Isabelle!

ELLIOTT

How remarkably she has developed!

MORRIS

You think so!

ELLIOTT

She is wonderfully changed.

MORRIS

You are right. She is wonderfully changed. *Why* has she changed?

ELLIOTT

Why?

MORRIS

Elliott, your profession is brotherly love. Do you think this a brotherly way to deal with me?

ELLIOTT

This way! What way?

MORRIS

The way of the hypocrite. You *know* why Isabelle has changed.

ELLIOTT

I know?

MORRIS

Yes, you know; and you cannot escape me by turning into a poll parrot. You yourself have changed Isabelle.

ELLIOTT

You interest me. Can you advance any proofs?

MORRIS

Proofs! Look where she's gone now; gone to mind the baby of her own accord. Unprecedented! I tell you, you are weaning her from my cause—from my affections; instructing her how to rock cradles and dandle infants. You are domesticating her. You are making her a Mat!

ELLIOTT

And suppose I were, may I ask what you are making of Mildred?

MORRIS

Certainly. An Anti. I am proud of it, and I gave you fair warning. This morning I offered you my principles; you rejected them. I told you then you would reap the consequences. Now you must face them. Amorata has accepted my principles, and has repudiated you.

ELLIOTT

I beg pardon. *Who* did you say?

MORRIS

Your wife that was.

ELLIOTT

But you mentioned another——

MORRIS

I mentioned her mystic name. You would not understand. Oh, it's like you to smile.

ELLIOTT

[*Biting his lips, glances at a large pad which he carries.*]

Did I smile? If so, it was only to conceal what I suffer.

MORRIS

Do I not suffer too? But do you think I object to that? Suffering is the symbol of the cause I serve. The joy of suffering is the art of mysticism; and I am a practical mystic, who lives his art.

ELLIOTT

You evade the subject of Mildred.

MORRIS

I do not. I have freed her from your tyranny frankly, honorably, above-board. But you have gone to work clandestinely, treacherously, to inveigle Isabelle away from me.

ELLIOTT

If I have ingratiated myself with Isabelle, how need that affect you? [*Searchingly*] Of course, now, if you were married to her——

MORRIS

Married! Do you imagine that the ABRA CADABRA of a mumbled marriage-vow makes any difference?

ELLIOTT

I have understood you to claim that it makes all the difference in the world.

MORRIS

How so?

ELLIOTT

Between an Anti and a Mat.

MORRIS

Why—why, of course, in a sense, it does and—and it doesn't. That depends on whether one speaks as a man, or a mystic.

ELLIOTT

[*Glancing again at his pad.*]

You must forgive me if I regard this matter merely as a man. To me, it is terribly simple: You, my brother, have entered my home and seduced from me my wife.

MORRIS

Seduced! How old-fashioned you are!

ELLIOTT

Yes, Morris, old-fashioned. I am the last in the line of those ancient ghosts you spoke of: my skull is square and my chin is [*Glancing at his pad*] Puritanical. To me, this outrage is not to be regarded lightly. To me, it is a domestic tragedy.

MORRIS

Do you think I don't appreciate the tragedy?

ELLIOTT

[*Taking up the leathern case, begins to toy with it, with increasing air of despondency.*]

This case—I have smiled, I have assumed a forced gaiety, in hopes—this very case—in hopes that I should awaken; that this nightmare would be dispelled. It's of leather—just a hundred years ago.

MORRIS

What's a hundred——

ELLIOTT

This case. I have tried to put it off my mind. But I fear it is hopeless.

MORRIS

What?

ELLIOTT

The case. It belonged to an old cavalry—[*With sudden intensity*] Morris, why have you come back to revive these old horrors of our house? Isn't this the night of the nineteenth of May?

MORRIS

It is. What of it?

ELLIOTT

[*In a terrible voice.*]

Don't stand there. He stood in that very spot.

MORRIS

[*Starting from the spot.*]

Who? What are you talking about?

ELLIOTT

Colonel Nehemiah Grey, our ancestor. He stood there, and opening this very case, he took a brace——

MORRIS

Took what?

ELLIOTT

He took a brace—a brace of old cavalry pistols——

MORRIS

Cavalry pistols? Good Lord—my play!

ELLIOTT

[*Who has opened the case, takes slowly out a pistol.*]

And on this very night in May, he shot—I've tried to put it off my mind. But Mildred—the thought of Mildred always eggs me on. Morris, this affair must be settled between us. When I am moved deeply, I

am not a man of words, but deeds. We two are brothers. One of us is enough for Mildred. Just a hundred years ago to-night, two Grey brothers stood here, as we are standing now. One was superfluous. Well [*slowly raising the pistol*], one was removed. ✓

MORRIS

[*Crying out.*]

What are you doing?

[*The voice of MILDRED calls outside: "Hosmer!"*]

ELLIOTT

[*Letting his hand fall.*]

Her voice!

[*Leaving the open pistol-case on the table, he moves backward toward the desk, concealing the pistol.*]

MILDRED

[*Outside, with musical cadence.*]

Hosmer!

MORRIS

[*Looking toward the door, right.*]

Amorata!

[*Enter MILDRED. She is dressed in Neapolitan costume of scarlet and yellow, and whirls into the room, shaking a tambourine.*]

MILDRED

Hosmer! Are you ready for the ball? We will go to the ball together.

ELLIOTT

[Sinks murmuring into the desk-chair.]

Hic jacet Elliott!

MORRIS

What is this, Amorata?

MILDRED

This is your triumph, my Hosmer. I have arrayed myself in scarlet and fine linen for you—for you. Look: am I not erotic—am I not beautiful?

MORRIS

Beyond words.

MILDRED

We will go to the ball. I will dance for you the Tarantella. Would you know me, my Hosmer? Look in my eyes—would you guess the despair in their brightness? See me move—would you suspect the matrimony that once weighed me down?

MORRIS

Never, Amorata.

MILDRED

For your sake I wear proudly the colors of our cause. In your praise I reveal my long-stifled genius.
[Beginning to dance as she speaks.]

This, at last, is to live. I, the dead, am awakened. I will go to the ball. Like this I will dance—like this, for you alone. Es lebe das Leben!

[*While she dances, MORRIS—glancing uneasily at ELLIOTT, who has buried himself in the desk-chair in the corner—approaches the table and secures the pistol-case, which he closes and holds tightly under his arm. MILDRED has danced but a moment, and is just taking a wild, vivacious pose, when ISABELLE enters, left, confronting her.*]

ISABELLE

Mildred! Is *this*—you?

MILDRED

Madam, this is Amorata. I am dancing for Hosmer.

ISABELLE

Hosmer—Amorata! You have been reading his play!

MILDRED

We are going to the ball.

ISABELLE

What ball? I don't believe there's a ball.

MILDRED

Pardon me: there is *always* a ball.

ISABELLE

Maurice, I appeal to you. Is there a ball? Are you going with her?

MILDRED

Come, my Hosmer.

ISABELLE

Maurice! Will you do such a thing?

MORRIS

I will do all things in the cause of Anti-Matrimony.

ISABELLE

But that is *our* cause.

MORRIS

No longer, Isabelle; you have deserted it.

MILDRED

[*To MORRIS.*]

Take me away.

ISABELLE

Elliott—Elliott, I appeal to you.

[ELLIOTT, *who has been writing at the desk, rises, feverishly thrusting a sheet of paper into an envelope.*]

MILDRED

[*To MORRIS.*]

You hear; she appeals to *him*. Oh, telephone for an automobile!

[*MORRIS reaches toward the instrument.*]

ISABELLE

Stop! I forbid you to telephone.

MORRIS

You forbid! By what right?

ISABELLE

By the right of an injured wife.

MILDRED AND ELLIOTT

A wife!

ISABELLE

Yes; that man is my husband.

MILDRED AND ELLIOTT

Horrible!

MORRIS

Nonsense; she is mad.

[Putting his hand on the telephone, holds the ear-receiver to speak in.]

What's the number?

ISABELLE

Stop! We were married on November 16, 1907, in Vienna.

MILDRED

Hosmer, is this true?

MORRIS

No; she is mad, I say. Ask her for proofs.

ISABELLE

[*Unclassing from her throat her gold chain with a medallion locket.*]

Here! Here are the proofs.

MILDRED AND MORRIS

What? Where?

ISABELLE

[*Opens the locket, and unfolding a thin sheet of foreign paper, holds it out exultantly.*]

Here; this is our marriage-certificate.

MILDRED

[*Taking it, reads.*]

“Stadthaus, Wien: den sechzehnten November, neunzehn hundert sieben und——”

MORRIS

[*Snatching it from her.*]

Let me see.

ISABELLE

O Maurice, I forgot to burn it.

MORRIS

[*Glancing at the paper, strides to the fireplace.*]

Let me save you the trouble.

[*He throws it in the flames.*]

ISABELLE

Help! Save it.

[*She snatches, but singes her fingers.*]

MILDRED

You deny her claim?

MORRIS

I repudiate it—and her.

ISABELLE

Maurice——

MORRIS

Stand away from me.

[He goes toward the telephone.]

ISABELLE

Hear me! I beg——

ELLIOTT

*[Starting forward between them, dashes an envelope
at MILDRED's feet.]*

Farewell to *all* of you!

[He rushes out of doors.]

MILDRED

[Tremblingly.]

Elliott!

MORRIS

[Stooping for the envelope, hands it to MILDRED.]

What new insult is this?

MILDRED

[In agitation, opens it and reads.]

"Faithless one:

You will find me in the mill-race.

Elliott."

MORRIS

The mill-race!

[From outdoors, resounds a sharp, single report.]

MILDRED

Hark! Was that a pistol shot?

MORRIS

[Opening the case.]

The other is gone.

ISABELLE

I saw one in his hand.

MILDRED

My God! He has shot himself.

MORRIS

[Starting toward the door.]

Oh, it's not possible!

MILDRED

[Motionless and intense.]

The end has come.

ISABELLE

Oh, quickly!

MORRIS

What shall we do?

MILDRED

[*Half audibly.*]

The mill-race.

MORRIS

My scenario: it's all so horribly like. What have I done?

MILDRED

[*Swaying with closed eyes.*]

Let me lean upon you.

MORRIS

Don't fall: I'm beside you.

MILDRED

Hosmer, it had to be. But we will go forth in atonement.

MORRIS

Go forth?

MILDRED

To the mill-race. See! I lean far out on your arm. Together—together! Hosmer!

MORRIS

Amorata!

[*They go out into the night.*]

ISABELLE

[*Following to the door.*]Maurice, take *me!* take *me!*[*Enter, down the stairs, MRS. GREY, in perturbation.*]

MRS. GREY

My dear, I heard a noise—a shot. What—what's the matter?

ISABELLE

[*Wildly.*]

Elliott—Mildred—Maurice——

MRS. GREY

Where are they gone?

ISABELLE

[*Rushing out of doors.*]

To the mill-race.

MRS. GREY

A race, my dear? A race! But why——
[*Hurrying to the door, she calls out, while the door, right, is opened stealthily, and ELLIOTT, entering, pistol in hand, tiptoes up the stairs.*]

Children—take a lantern. You'll need rubbers. It's very muddy by the mill-pond. It may be burglars—A lantern, my dears—your rubbers!

CURTAIN.

ACT IV



ACT IV

Later, the same evening.

At the desk ELLIOTT is discovered, arranging a pile of letters. At the table, MILDRED—in a dressing-gown, worn over her Tarantella costume—sits typewriting. ELLIOTT crosses to the table.

ELLIOTT

May I interrupt you a moment?

MILDRED

Certainly.

ELLIOTT

Here's that correspondence on the Civic Convention. Please enter these under separate headings.

[Handing her separate piles of opened letters.]

This—factory hygiene.

MILDRED

[As she takes each pile, marks the top sheet with a pencil, and lays the pile separately on the table.]

File under F.

ELLIOTT

Immigration service.

MILDRED

I.

ELLIOTT

Tuberculosis exhibit.

MILDRED

T.

ELLIOTT

Playground association. Conservation of forests.

MILDRED

P.—C.

ELLIOTT

Arbitration of labor.

MILDRED

A. All right, sir.

ELLIOTT

[*Glancing at the typewriter carriage and lifting it.*]

Now, in this article of mine that you're typewriting, I've been thinking: this matter of reclaiming the state bogs——

MILDRED

[*With a quick glance and smile.*]

Draining the swamps, you mean.

ELLIOTT

Yes.

MILDRED

[*Taking down a file, she puts away the letters while she talks.*]

Want my advice?

ELLIOTT

Well, if you——

MILDRED

Sit down. I advise you to make *us* a shining example, and begin right here at home.

ELLIOTT

Here?

MILDRED

In our own orchard. Look at my red stockings!

ELLIOTT

My dear, you should have changed them—and your dress. You'll catch cold.

MILDRED

You forget: I'm immune. I've got the influenza already—from those poor children.

ELLIOTT

Where did you leave them?

MILDRED

After your shot? Near the pond. When Isabelle caught up with us, I slipped into the mill, locked the door, and came through the back way. They were groping then toward the old dam. The frogs were piping; it was dark as a pocket, and the mud [*Bursts out laughing and hums.*]*—Oh, my dancing slippers!*

ELLIOTT

What! You steered them into the swamp?

MILDRED

[*Innocently.*]

I didn't say "steered."

ELLIOTT

[*With a dubious look.*]

Mildred! You never told me.

MILDRED

No sermons, please, till I win. My little game isn't over.

ELLIOTT

How so?

MILDRED

Isabelle is safely married to Morris, but Morris hasn't returned the compliment—yet.

ELLIOTT

By George, I lost track of that. Do you suppose he's plotting vengeance out there now?

MILDRED

I suppose fire and brimstone are a frost to it. You know, he threatened before to burn the ghosts out of these walls.

ELLIOTT

What are we to do if he shows fight?

MILDRED

Trust Amorata!

ELLIOTT

But suppose he talks Anti among the neighbors?

MILDRED

Well, Amorata can talk too.

ELLIOTT

But that won't put water on his fire.

MILDRED

My dear, mud is thicker than water.

[She puts out her slippers.]

ELLIOTT

I see. You mean that, after the swamp, his Anti-Matrimony reform will be left to——

MILDRED

To the bullfrogs. No young reformer can afford to wade far into mud—especially good, mushy mill-pond mud. Now will you scold me?

[Enter MRS. GREY.]

MRS. GREY

Haven't they come back?

MILDRED

Who?

MRS. GREY

Why, the children—Morris and Isabelle.

[ELLIOTT *resumes work at his desk.*]

MILDRED

Don't worry about them. They're sitting in the arbor.

MRS. GREY

In the arbor! But it's dark; it's wet; it's been raining hard. Why don't they come in?

MILDRED

Just a case of cold feet, I guess.

MRS. GREY

Oh, and I told Isabelle to take her rubbers: they'll catch their deaths.

MILDRED

Never fear. They've escaped death once to-night.

MRS. GREY

Mildred! *was* it a burglar? What do you mean? Oh dear, I do wish you'd explain if it's still charades, or a game, or what?

[ELLIOTT *and* MILDRED *break into laughter.*]

MILDRED

Still charades, mother. Aren't you guessing?

MRS. GREY

Well, I'm still puzzling. But, anyway, dears, it does my heart good now to hear you laughing again, and to see you both happy and busy at your work as usual. It must be a game, I'm sure; so I'll keep on guessing.

MILDRED

Do!—that's a darling.

MRS. GREY

'And now that you tell me they're married, I know I should be perfectly happy. But why did they say they weren't?

MILDRED

Oh, just to be in style: it's the fashion.

MRS. GREY

I suppose that's it. You see, the fashions change so, I don't seem to keep up with them. Now, when Elliott's father and I were married, the wedding-cards came first and the christening afterward; but nowadays——

MILDRED

Nowadays, dear, it's christen in haste and marry at leisure.

MRS. GREY

To think of it!

[*As MILDRED rises and lays aside her dressing-gown,
MRS. GREY looks at her closely.*]

Oh, that dress, Mildred! It sets me worrying again. I'm afraid it's worse than charades.

MILDRED

Worse?

MRS. GREY

I'm afraid you're practising to—to really go on the stage.

MILDRED

Why, what gave you that idea?

MRS. GREY

Something you said. You said, my dear, that Morris had taught you to be one of those theatrical persons I've read about; it begins with "s."

MILDRED

A star, you mean?

MRS. GREY

No, it's another word: "Super"—that was it—"super."

MILDRED

A "super"—me!

MRS. GREY

Yes, my dear, you said you were going to be a superwoman. I heard you.

MILDRED

[*Laughing.*]

That's right—just a superwoman. And now I'm going to make *you* the star, Mother.

MRS. GREY

[*Aghast.*]

Me! Me, Mildred—a star?

MILDRED

Yes; come along! I've got an idea.

ELLIOTT

[*As MILDRED starts up the stairs.*]

Where are you bound now?

MILDRED

To the attic again. You must go to your room, and take the lamp. They'll never come in while there's a light downstairs. Come, mother: it's still charades, you know. [*Raising her voice*] Good-night, Elliott!

MRS. GREY

[*Preceding her.*]

A star! But—but—how will you make me shine, Mildred?

MILDRED

[*With long calling cadence.*]

Good-night, Elliott!

[*Exeunt along the landing, left.*]

ELLIOTT

[*Taking the lamp and some papers, goes out, right.*]

Good-night, Mildred. Good-night!

[*The fire is very low, and casts faint, sputtering gleams into the dark hall. After a silence, through which only the clock ticks, two vague forms emerge from the deeper gloom outdoors, and move stealthily in to the glow of the hearth.*]

ISABELLE

[*Barely audible.*]

Please put on a log.

[*The dim figure of MORRIS gropes to the wood-closet, opens it and reaches in. ISABELLE shivers and shakes her skirt.*]

Thank heaven they didn't sit up any longer: I'm soaked through.

[*Rummaging with half-articulate oaths, MORRIS brings forth two sticks of wood, puts them on the fire and pokes it. The room grows intermittently lighter, revealing the plightful appearance of the two. MORRIS'S dress-suit is soaked and bedraggled with mire, the shirt-bosom bespattered with mud. ISABELLE'S appearance is similarly forlorn; and both are dishevelled by the rain.*]

ISABELLE

[*Faintly.*]

I'm famished.

MORRIS

[*Taking a silver basket of white grapes from the mantelpiece.*]

Grapes; have some.

ISABELLE

[*More faintly.*]

Thanks.

[*Shoving the settee near the hearth for ISABELLE to sit in, MORRIS—wringing his dilapidated coat-tails—sinks on to a hassock in the shadow. Follows then a speechless pause, during which the occasional patter of grape-skins in the fire indicates their occupation. Soon ISABELLE speaks, plaintively.*]

If only the mill-door hadn't been locked——

[*MORRIS makes a guttural sound.*]

We needn't have waded through that awful swamp.

MORRIS

Hah!

ISABELLE

Maurice, are you ill?

MORRIS

[*Abysmally.*]

Mill-door!

ISABELLE

Is it the grapes? I'm afraid they're sour.

MORRIS

She locked it. I saw her go in. She left us to flounder in the mire.

ISABELLE

Ah, so you begin to see through her. At last you realize I was right. You must acknowledge——

[*A bunch of grapes falls in her lap.*]

Thank you. Oh, how I do wish——

MORRIS

[*Hoarsely.*]

Don't wish: eat!

ISABELLE

[*After another pause of grape-eating.*]

Belovèd, what will become of your campaign now?

MORRIS

[*Growling.*]

Mud!

ISABELLE

Wasn't it awful? Up to my knees! If only we had stayed on the mountain-tops of our spirit, this never would have happened. I'm sure it's symbolic.

[*MORRIS mutters.*]

Don't you feel, dear, after all, that this mud has a certain mysticy something——

MORRIS

Sticky? I'm a paste-pot!

ISABELLE

It will soon dry, dear. Now that I'm safe indoors and feeling warmer, I begin to see all this in its true poetic light.

MORRIS

Poetic! Where's a match?

[He rises and gropes about.]

ISABELLE

I begin to feel that I can even forgive Mildred. I can understand how, being my sister, a certain mystic likeness to me should have led you to feel that temporary infatuation——

MORRIS

Damn!

ISABELLE

Can't you find a light, dear?

MORRIS

[Striking his shins against a chair.]

Not a glim!

ISABELLE

Light a scrap of paper.

MORRIS

[Tearing a piece of paper off a pad on the table, takes it to the fire. There, about to light it, he looks closer and reads.]

"Suicide: pistols, coal-gas, drowning (mill-race preferred)." O Hades!

ISABELLE

What did you say, love?

MORRIS

I said—*Hell*.

[*He crumples the paper, twists it and lights it in the fire. Carrying it thus as a taper, he searches on the table.*]

Where's a cigarette?

[*Feeling in a tin box, he takes from it a cartridge, glances at it, lifts the box quickly and reads the label.*]

"44 Calibre Blank Cartridges." Blank! Blankety blank!!

[*The taper burns short and he blows it out.*]

ISABELLE

Besides, dear, when I stop to consider that, out of my guiding love for you, I really did dazzle poor Elliott a little too——

[*The clock begins to strike.*]

Goodness! Ten o'clock. I wonder if that darling baby has had her——

MORRIS

What? What's that?

ISABELLE

Oh, nothing—I beg pardon.

MORRIS

Did I hear you refer to the baby?

ISABELLE

I just thought about her bottle, but of course——

MORRIS

Thank God! That's the first sensible thought you've had to-night.

ISABELLE

Maurice!

MORRIS

No—*Morris*; "Maurice" is up the spout.

ISABELLE

But, my love—you know, ever since we first entered into Anti-Matrimony——

MORRIS

Anti-Matrimony is in the mud.

ISABELLE

Dearest, don't speak so. You mustn't think because I weakly referred to the baby that I don't share with you your lofty emancipated ideals. And, beloved, even if I did keep our marriage-certificate in the locket, please forgive me for——

MORRIS

Quit it, Isabelle. It's the only thing I do forgive you for.

ISABELLE

What—the marriage-certificate! But you've always told me that the Masters——

MORRIS

Drop them, please! Can't you see that I've got to get a whole clean suit, or go back to the swamp?

ISABELLE

A clean suit? But——

MORRIS

A new campaign.

ISABELLE

[*Gasp*ing.]

Do you mean that we are to be *Mats*?

MORRIS

Just so—to scrape the mud off.

ISABELLE

But, darling, is that quite consistent?

MORRIS

Consistent? Haven't I told you that consistency is a fallacy of the vulgar mind? I am an artist.

ISABELLE

Oh!

MORRIS

All perfect art is paradox.

ISABELLE

I see.

MORRIS

And therefore a modern artist who is truly a superman— Oh, damn it, there I go again. Stop me. I'm cribbing from the old dress-suit case.

ISABELLE

Dearest, I don't know just what to say. I feel so very—so— What will Mildred think of this change in you?

MORRIS

She? Don't you see that she thinks she has the Yankee laugh on us?

ISABELLE

Insufferable American humor!

MORRIS

Quite so. It's devilish, but now it's our last resort. It's simply a case of fight the devil with fire, or—be roasted. [*Muttering*] "Mill-race preferred!"

ISABELLE

What are we to do?

MORRIS

Yankee them back, that's all. Wipe them out with a clean sponge. They expect me to scowl and swear. Well then, watch me smile and compliment.

ISABELLE

I'm watching, dear. Do you really mean it?

MORRIS

[*Grimly.*]

Do I look it?

ISABELLE

I mean— Do you mind, darling, if I—if I feel—
very happy about it?

MORRIS

Happy about what?

ISABELLE

[*Embracing him.*]

That we're to be Mats, after all!

THE VOICE OF MILDRED

[*Low and plaintively.*]

Hosmer!

[*MORRIS starts.*]

ISABELLE

[*Clinging to him.*]

My dear!

[*At the top of the stairs, appears an obscure Figure.*]

THE VOICE

[*Wailing again.*]

Hosmer! Why have you forsaken me?

ISABELLE

[*Nervously, to MORRIS.*]

What is it?

MORRIS

It's the limit.

[*The Figure hesitates, and starts to turn back.*]

THE VOICE

It is I—Amorata!

ISABELLE

Some one is coming down the stairs. Look! Is it she?

[*In the vagueness, the Figure slowly descends.*]

THE VOICE

[*With dying cadence.*]

Why did you leave me alone—alone in the mill-pond?

MORRIS

[*To ISABELLE.*]

Keep out of the firelight.

[*At the bottom of the stairs, the Figure emerges in to the faint glow of the fire. Clad in a long, gray cloak of ample folds, and huge peaked hat pulled far down over its face, it moves slowly toward them.*]

MILDRED

Now I am doomed to walk as your family ghost:
O grey, grey, grey—forsaken forevermore!

MORRIS

[*To ISABELLE.*]

Leave go of me.

THE VOICE

[*As the Figure raises one cloaked arm and points at them.*]

I am the Passionate Puritan. Forever I shall haunt you both—forevermore!

MORRIS

[*Coming forward.*]

Stop pointing at me. Take off your hat. Stop this miserable faking!

THE FIGURE

[*Removing the great hat.*]

Why, Morris, it's only charades.

[*Emerging from the ample cloak, which falls on the floor, MRS. GREY stands revealed in the firelight.*]

ISABELLE

Mother Grey!

MORRIS

[*Raising both arms, inarticulate, suddenly bolts for a corner.*]

O shucks!

MRS. GREY

Yes; you've guessed. That's the word. Mildred just told me so.

MILDRED

[Appearing between the curtains of the landing, runs down the stairs, striking a match.]

Elliott, Elliott, come! Hot chocolate for five!

[She lights a lamp on the desk.]

ELLIOTT

[Entering, downstairs, left, with a steaming tray.]

Who's won? What does he say?

MILDRED

We've won: He says "Shucks!" We've made a Yankee of him, after all.

ELLIOTT

[Setting the tray on the table.]

Hang if we haven't.

MILDRED

You darlings—both! The Antitoxin has cured you.

MRS. GREY

The what—Mildred?

MILDRED

[Whispers in MRS. GREY'S ear.]

Quickly.

MRS. GREY

But how——

[Motioned away by MILDRED, she exits, agitated, up the stairs.]

MILDRED

You adorable boy—let me kiss you!

MORRIS

Thanks; presently. [*Aside to ISABELLE*] Now just watch me! [*To MILDRED*] But first I wish to apologize.

MILDRED

Apologize!

MORRIS

For having made you the victims of my little practical joke.

ELLIOTT

Victims!

MILDRED

Your little joke?

MORRIS

I am very glad you take it so lightly. I was afraid— You see our appearance.

ELLIOTT

Been fishing?

MORRIS

Yes, Elliott—in the mill-race—fishing for suckers. They still bite.

ELLIOTT

So it looks.

MORRIS

Doesn't it? You see, it happened like this: I am, as Mildred knows, writing a little skit on the Masters, called "Hosmer's Home," in which, by the way, Isabelle is collaborating.

ISABELLE

A little skit.

MORRIS

So it occurred to me—while we were waiting for our trunks from the steamer—knowing Mildred's great fondness for dancing and private theatricals——

MILDRED

[*Twinkling.*]

Oh, you arch villain!

MORRIS

It occurred to me, I say, to enlist her rare gifts in trying out a few scenes in the rough, just to work up my material. She was very obliging.

ISABELLE

Very.

MORRIS

You also, Elliott, came nobly to the rescue. I am only sorry—and apologize—that in working up the mill-race climax, our enthusiasm should have slightly damaged these stage-properties: This dress-suit of

yours, Elliott, which I took the liberty of borrowing——

ELLIOTT

The deuce you did!

MORRIS

And that dress of yours, Mildred, which you so kindly loaned to Isabelle.

ISABELLE

It *was* good of you, Mildred!

MILDRED

Not at all, dear, considering your trunks arrived here yesterday evening.

ISABELLE

[*Shaking MILDRED.*]

My own trunks? Here? Yesterday?

MILDRED

So now we are ready for supper.

[*She arranges the table and chairs.*]

ELLIOTT

[*Taking MORRIS's hand.*]

Never mind about the suit. Want to change now?

MORRIS

No, thanks. I'll put it in the suit-case—later. Just now I'm interested in that map of yours.

[*Points to the wall.*]

ELLIOTT

Oh, my ideal community!

MORRIS

Yes. Please show me your Home for Incurable Married Couples.

MRS. GREY

[*Appears on the stairs, holding a swaddled bundle.*]

Mildred——

ISABELLE

[*With a cry.*]

Oh, it's the baby!

[*She rushes to the stairs and seizes it from Mrs. Grey.*]

The darling! Has she had her bottle?

MORRIS

Halloa! Is that Cynthia?

MILDRED

[*Beckoning all to the table, where the steaming cups are arranged, takes CYNTHIA in her arms.*]

Cynthia who?

MORRIS

Just Cynthia.

MILDRED

No, indeed. This is Cynthia Grey. Isn't it, Mother?

MRS. GREY

Oh, yes, my son. Please! We can christen her *Grey* now, can't we?

MORRIS

Grey? No, Mammy: Red-white-and-blue for Cynthia!

MILDRED

Her Aunt Mildred is going to be godmother.

MORRIS

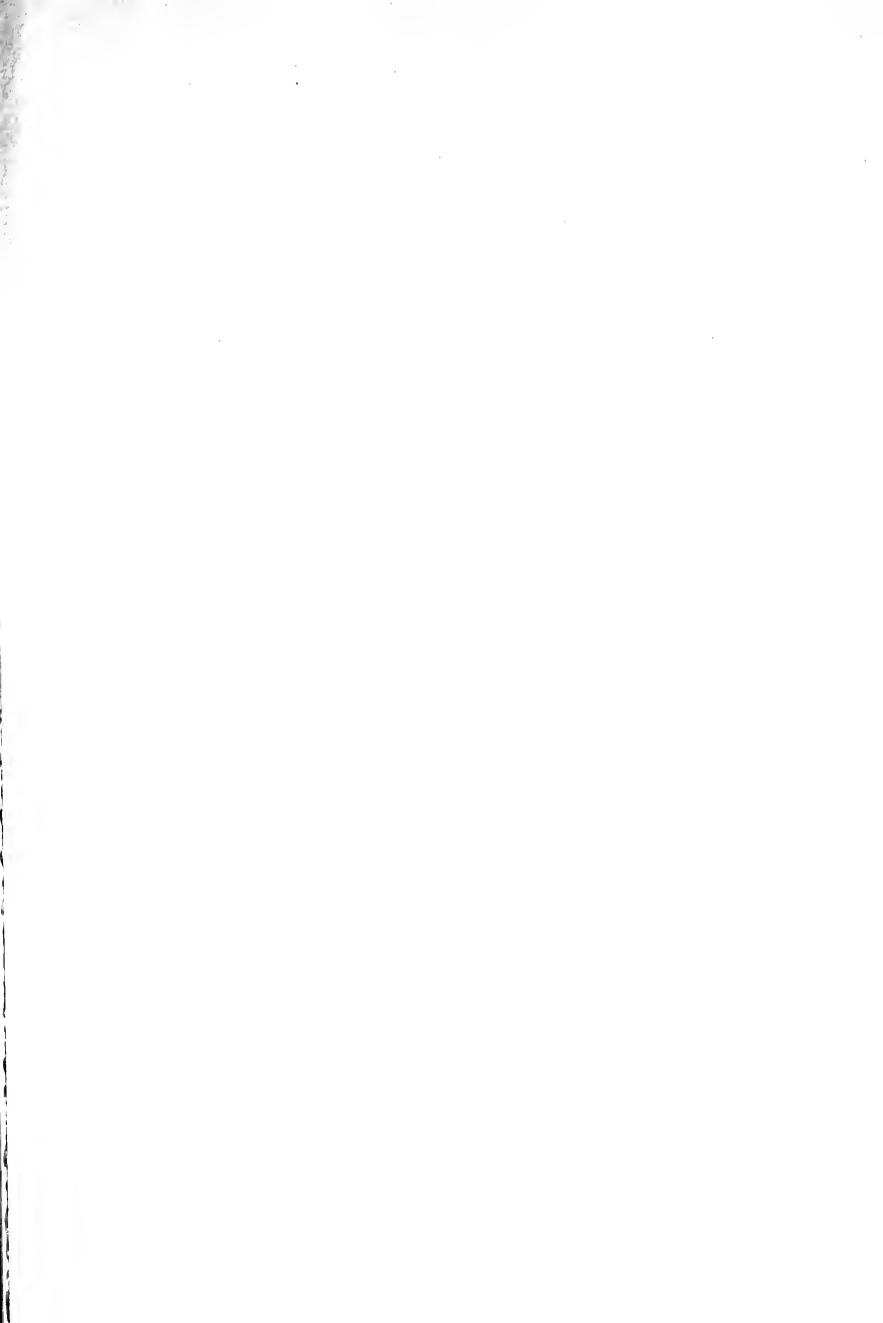
[*Looking across his lifted cup of chocolate, to MILDRED, as they all gather round the table.*]
Here's to her Auntie!

MILDRED

[*Cuddling CYNTHIA.*]

Hush, Morris. You mustn't say "Anti!"

FINIS.





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